

## **Oral History Interview Transcript**

**Interviewee: Dot Aidulis**

**Date: 16/11/2016**

**Location: Glasgow**

**Time: 01:40:56**

**Interviewer: Sarah Browne**

**Time period: 1990s**

**Groups: Glasgow Women's Aid**

**Roles: Domestic abuse survivor**

*Okay that is us recording now and it's just a conversation. I'm not going to be grilling you! So, um, the first question we've been asking everybody has been ... I guess it's not a question, it's a request if you could kind of tell us what your connection is to Women's Aid.*

Okay there's a pile of stuff that I've just come across. Um, Women's Aid, first got involved, um, ooh about fifteen years ago maybe, when I say involved it was really just that I became aware of them, I was having problems with my ex-husband and uh yeah I knew it wasn't right and everything and I saw some Women's Aid leaflets. I can't even remember where, I just saw them and picked up a wee tiny one and stuck it in my bag and went home and just filed it in my head as well I think. I just thought mhm I'm going to keep an eye on that, I'm, I'm, I'm that's good I know they're there. That's good and then just as thing unfolded learned a wee bit more about Women's Aid and learned a lot more about what just wasn't right and stuff and the fact that there was help and the fact that there's a lot of it about, which is good in a way because you know it's not just you being stupid or you know. So it was really just that. And I knew things weren't quite right and I saw a leaflet and that's thing and I think that information thing is just so powerful.

*When you say that you learned more about Women's Aid, so how did you, how did you learn about them then, apart from the leaflet, was there anything else?*

Um I saw signs I think, maybe in the doctor's or something, I've seen wee posters and stuff like that but I mean this was like 1990 something so I can't remember if it might have been before internet or very, you know there wasn't, it wasn't when people just sat and looked up everything online at that point um so it really was just the leaflets but I think they really stuck in my brain because it just

absolutely connected. It's like they know how to in a good way they know what buttons to push I think maybe. They know what might grab people and I just, I think the most important thing was that I never forgot that they were there. It wasn't just I came across them and oh yeah and forgot, it was just permanently in my brain from then on and anytime anything was going on horrible I'd be thinking mmm, that was always like a wee comfort, and a wee light, a wee thing there to help you and I knew eventually I would go back and look at it. So it really was just the leaflets. It was, I mean I think there was internet and stuff but it wasn't like it is now and I didn't have a computer and all of this and I didn't, you know, nobody had it on their phones at that time or anything like that so it really was just the leaflets and I think wow, a bit of paper, that's power.

**00:03:03** *And so you'd said that you knew things weren't right in the relationship you were in and then that leaflet as well. So was there a point at which you realised things weren't right. Was there or was it something that happened quite gradually?*

Very gradual. But at the same time I kind of think I always knew. It's just that I suppose a bit of cliché thing where there's somebody a wee bit different and they're a bit more noticeable and they kind of go a bit over-board being nice to you and stuff and you think because it's just a wee bit different from all the humdrum stuff um and yeah uh-ah yeah and then something stupid'll happen and you'll think mhm what was that all about? Och nothing and then those things mount up and it becomes the good times in between the bad times or just it's like the reverse this is all horrible and now and again there's some nice things so it's very, very, very gradual. Very gradual. But that usual way of they sweep you off your feet and all that and so I went away down south to live with him and everything. Yeah bought me flowers in the lab, I was working in a lab at the time, I was doing science research, um just gestures and all this. And it was a wee bit like, the way I think of it now you know even then once they get you it's like ah-ha now I'm going to show you my real self and it's like, you know, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang? You know the bit where the child-catcher's going about the cobbled, big lovely cobbled streets and everything in his wee van with the twinkly bells and the flowers all over it and everything and he's going lollipops and all that and then the kids go into the van and all the flowers falls off, the lollipops disappear and it becomes a cage and that's it. It was a wee bit like that. All the nice things just went, you know. But not all at once. It wasn't as sudden as that. But it's kind of like the before and after, they hook you in and once they've got you then they start revealing their true self really, you know? And I kind of always knew this just wasn't right.

*It's a good analogy of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.*

Yeah I can see it more clearly now but I think at the time it's just part of your life and you're busy and you're doing stuff and all of this and this is just part of everything else that's going on around you and so you don't, it doesn't stand out so much um and but that instinct that I learned much later on about instinct and how powerful that is and everything and just to listen to that wee voice. But then again I do think, in fact I know, I would have done it all again. I know that.

**00:05:52** *Why do you say that?*

Because you have to try. At the time it was the right thing to do in that I did make up my own mind. It was what I wanted to do at the time and then I thought you know it's that thing of och he'll get better or I'll fix him or I'll cure him or och you know the wee thing I'll look after him and it'll all be okay. Um but a few years later after we'd left and done everything and been up here a good few years and my son had pretty much decided he didnae want to have any contact with his dad. He had to go and visit him over the years but then at one point he decided nah. And he'd started saying things by then I'd never raised with him at all and but then he started saying some stuff and then we'd talk about things but only when he initiated it. And one day we were just in there, in the kitchen, at the kitchen door and he was upset about something, he was just kind of bleurgh, on edge and we were having a conversation and he was just bleurgh not happy it was some stuff had been bugging him and he said 'but it's your fault you married him' and I said '**[name of son anonymised]** I would go back and do that all again, knowing what I know now just to have you'. I said 'you wouldn't be here if I didn't do that and I can't, I can't not have you', don't, you know, um so that was when we really started talking about things properly, me and my son and he would have been about 12, 11 or 12 at that point, maybe 10, 11, 12, something like that.

*It must have been quite difficult.*

Yeah but everyday, everyday, everyday, you just do everything you need to do. You just keep going. And you know you can look at it both ways, some people will say well if you've got a child you know you have to go away with your child and that's more difficult and all of that but actually, and I mean it will be different for everybody, you can't compare any two people at all but for me everything was centred around my son, he was the reason I got up, did everything, sorted stuff out, put him in nursery, used what I thought in my best judgement would be okay for **[name of son anonymised]** as

a means to make all sorts of decisions over the years to do with him, when **[name of son anonymised]** was contacting, you know he was still going on at me through email and all the rest and I always had to think well they've got their relationship, that's separate to me. And I'm not just going to go 'you can't see your child'. Or tell **[name of son anonymised]** you're not allowed to see your dad because I thought well it's not my thing to say but I have to be there to just support him whatever he wants to do you know so that was how I kind of judged everything over the years and made my decisions was what was okay for **[name of son anonymised]**. As best as I could tell really.

**00:08:59** *And did you know anybody when you went down to England then?*

No, no, no.

*And did you make friends when you went?*

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah I did. I did. Uh-ah yeah yeah. Yeah a lot of work pals but I only really saw them in work because I worked a wee bit away. I worked in Newcastle and lived in Darlington so it was about maybe half an hour on the train and an hour up the A1. So like after work I would just have to drive away in my car and get the train, go to the station and get the train. So I didn't really, my work pals were brilliant, and we did some stuff, there was pubs round about and now and again we would go to after work and all of that but you know most of the time I would go back home but my pals were great, my work pals were absolutely brilliant and I enjoyed the job you know. The house was lovely, the neighbours were fantastic, I had a wee fluffy dog and everything, it was great. And then my wee son came along. Um yeah so no that was all fine. Yeah, I went to, I didn't know anyone but I was going down to be with this person and then within a month had got a job abroad and went abroad. So there was me in this place, I didn't have my son at this time, we weren't married at that point. I went down to live with him. Um so it was me who had left, let me think, I was working as a postdoctoral researcher here and I went down to live with him so I didn't have any family or anything like that, just basically left everything but it was fine because everybody moves about for their job. The kind of thing I'm involved in, science research thing, um you go where the work is and so I was looking around and I thought oh yeah move down and live with him, that'll be fine and I'll see what kind of science-y jobs are going on round about the North East of England. So that's um yeah I went down there. It was basically like moving for work kind of thing but I wouldn't have been looking for jobs down there had I not met him. So that was all okay. That was all fine.

**00:10:52** *And so was he, was he already abusive at that point or did you notice a change when you moved?*

Um let's think. Was he at that point? I would say now yes. But at the time I didn't know. I did not see it like that because it hadn't established itself as a pattern yet. There was some things I thought I've done that wrong or I've done this wrong. He's gone off on one but I didn't really know enough about it. This is when all the Women's Aid, you know you realise later that no that's not right that they're doing that. I remember a big row, not row, not row, it wasn't a row, he took a massive huff about something. He just took a really weird reaction and I thought oh what's going on there? Then he didn't speak to me for about a week and then he decided because he'd been looking at jobs up here that he wasnae going to do that anymore and I would have to move down there. And I'm like, and all this was, was um he was still down in England and I was up here. We'd met on holiday so we kept in touch and all that and um at the time I was writing up my PhD thesis and I had, so I was nearly done, and then I submitted it and all of that, and the Viva, the oral exam, was coming up. So I'd said something on the phone to him about oh I'm gonnae to meet my dad in town, he's going to be bring me a copy of the thesis to look at, I think I, yeah, round about that time there was a conference way down in the south of England just our lab were going down to. Um but I had my PhD Viva not long after that so I was meeting my dad in town to get my thesis off him to, I was still living at home, so my dad was coming into town to meet me from work to give me my thesis so that when I went on the plane with the lab to go down to England, basically I could sit and have wee look at, a wee look at that through the week. Anyway, apparently that was the wrong thing to do. Yeah. He went nuts. He says you should know it all already or something like that and I'm like but it was like that thick and it was three or four years of work and yeah I knew it but you know you're gonnae have a wee look through it. You know you wouldn't turn up to anything unprepared. But I don't, that's what he said. I can't remember what he said but anyway he got really angry and really annoyed that I was actually going to take the thesis down to Brighton with me. And I've no idea why he was annoyed. He just, I don't know. I still don't know. But I mean I gave up years ago trying to figure it out, it really doesn't matter but I said something about getting the thesis off my dad to read while I was away and he didn't like that so I got punished and what that consisted of was that um he was very snippy with me on the phone um and just left it kind of hinging and so I knew he was annoyed with me but I was going away the next day or else I think, I think later that day I was leaving with the lab to go down, that's why my dad had to bring it into town for me. Um and so I went down, we would phone every

day because he was living in England and I was here and so I went down and I thought right that's us all in Brighton and everyone was like this is great fun and all that and I'm like, I'm sitting in the taxi with all them, we'd got the plane taxi to where we were staying, I think it was in halls or something, it was in another uni the conference and eh everyone's like, I think this is where I first became aware of that kind of double life thing where you're pretending and stuff. So everyone was like yeah this is great and I was sitting in a bar at night and I was kind of psyching myself up to go and phone, phone him. You know that, I had to pluck up the courage to go and phone this person that I think I was engaged to at that point. Um yeah. And I had a wee pound coin, it was before mobiles and all of that, I had a wee pound coin, I had to go into the wee phone box thing and stick your pound in, waiting till he answered and he was like 'hello' and I'd be like 'hi, how you doing?' and he'd be like 'fine' and then just 'talk to you tomorrow', 'right'. And I'm like right he's still not fell back in with me, oh no. Right okay so I put the phone down and went back to the bar and everyone's like dah-de-dah and I'd be like he's still in a bad mood with me. Stick the smile on dah-de-dah. But it was fine. I wasn't scared at that point, it was just a bit weird. And I thought oh I've annoyed him, what's going on? Um so yeah that was a massive huff, didn't talk to me the whole of that week really, I had to keep phoning him up and hoping he'd be okay and he was still in the huff and then the following week I had my PhD viva and everything and so that was fine and then he thawed out a wee bit. I can't even remember when but we were talking again and then he said something like 'and you'll never know how close I came to moving up there' and I'm like okay. So apparently he'd been looking at jobs and he'd seen some things but because I had done this thing with the PhD thesis that was all out of the window now. And I had to move down there. I don't know. I don't know. So yeah that's how I kind of ended up down there but actually in retrospect looking back on it I'm glad, I'm really glad he did not come up here, really glad. Because I don't want him anywhere near me. So yeah.

*It's quite a big journey as well. I mean, I know it's only Darlington but...*

It's a few hours on the train from here or, you know, a bit longer to drive.

**00:16:45** *But did you feel like you had a support network there?*

Down there?

*Because if it had happened here you would have obviously had your family around you.*

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah and I wouldn't have gone away anywhere with him. Um down there, yeah, yeah in that I had friends and I had work colleagues and I really liked my wee house and my wee fluffy dog. It was nice and a nice place to be you know. It's a nice part of the country and all of that and I liked it so everything was okay and until, but I couldn't, I had a support network in terms of I had people that liked me, that took me seriously, that I could relax with and all of that but I never, I didn't tell anyone anything about the rubbish that was going.

**00:17:34** *And did anybody pick up anything? Did anybody mention anything about him? I was thinking about if he'd come to a works night out or come to pick you up or...*

No I think I really always had to go into his world. He didn't really want anything to do with me and my pals. So they didn't really see much of him. It was always me going to his work stuff and yeah. So but eventually I had to tell some people I was leaving. I can't remember why. I tried to leave two times before that. And it was one of those times and I had my son by then and I was sitting in the wee baby group. We used to take all our wee weans, I went to the ante-natal classes and made a lot of friends through that and everyone's bumps were different sizes and they're all waiting for the babies to pop out and all this and suddenly all the babies came along, the baby group and all that. So we would do all the wee kiddy things together. I made a lovely wee group of friends there, it was great. And I remember sitting in the wee soft play thing, just sitting on some big tyre or some big squashy ball thing and me and my pal, my other pal, and all our wee babies, and I said 'I'm going to leave but don't tell anyone, you can't tell anyone because he'll find me'. I remember one of my friends, Mandy, and her wee boy was Matthew, and uh and she had tears in her eyes. She was nearly crying because I said I was leaving. We were all good friends and we were quite close with all the baby stuff going on and yeah aha. So I remember saying at that point, and I think that was the second time, and I did actually leave but I went back a few days later. And also told someone else there, in fact yeah um that yeah that was a whole other operation. Yeah. Yeah. So I didn't tell anyone until I was at the point of leaving and it was basically because I needed their help. I needed somewhere to store stuff. I'd been looking at other, I'd been looking at other flats down there thinking right we need to move, I had my son by then, he was about two, and um there'd been so many things, right we canny do this, we need to go, I knew Women's Aid and all of that and um I thought we need to go, but he worked away by that point, he was working away. Um basically moved away from his wife and child, so I don't know why I'm thinking that I left because he wasnae there, he was in a foreign country! But anyway um I remember pushing **[name of son anonymised]**

in his wee buggy round the town, going in and out of estate agents and letting agents and things and just enquiring about flats and then actually did arrange to rent one. Um so that was fine and so, so I was going to move out of the house and move all my stuff and **[name of son anonymised]**'s stuff to this other flat. We were in a house and so we were going to move to a wee, it was another wee house actually, just a terraced house and a friend of mine was going away on holiday and she said you can store your stuff in my garage while we were away. Here's a key, it had a big giant big key to her garage and I got a removal van and moved everything to there um yeah and then I came up here back to Glasgow for the weekend with my son because I thought I need to be away, I'll do all the lawyer's stuff, do everything properly, so he knows where we are, and you know um I'm not stealing anything, I'm not stealing his son, I'm just going away until the lawyer stuff and I left a note, I left a note and said that um it's over whatever blah blah um but don't worry we'll sort it all out properly, we'll sort out **[name of son anonymised]** and what's happening with him and we'll sort out, we'll just make all the arrangements just so you know I'll be back to sort things out and we'll do it properly and all of that. So I left a note. I think at that point he wasn't actually abroad, he was working away down in Bristol. We were up in the north of England and he was down there. And he would come back at the weekends but not every weekend. And then it became few and far between. And then it became oh no he's coming back this weekend and dreading it. So it was one of the weekends he was coming back. And because he was away I was able to put lots of things in place and make arrangements and from all the Women's Aid stuff I knew a lot about the sorts of things that were important to do, about find somewhere to go and you know find somewhere to put your stuff and try and siphon off some money and you know just gradually over time putting things in place. So I was able to do that because he wasn't around. Um yeah and so I had to, you were saying about did anybody know? I only, people only knew when I was literally going to go and that was because one of my friends, we'd done teacher training together down there, I was doing teacher training by that point and she, anyway we became really good friends. She had a wee boy and so did I and all of that and she lived in Darlington so she was at college in Durham doing the teacher thing. But she was from Darlington so we palled up because we were from the same place and she was yeah I'd told her some stuff, I think I told her some stuff because we were away at the college and everything and I was out of Darlington for the day and she was a pal from there and so I think I told her stuff but not, anyway she gave me the keys to her garage and all of this and whatever and then I told my pals at the wee baby group thing just before, they were saying oh next week we can do this and I'm like I can't and they're like oh what's up? And I'm like I won't be here. They're like where are you going? I

says I'm going away, I'm leaving, I have to move away now. And they were like [makes sad facial expression]. So they cried and all that. Um yeah.

**00:24:33** *Was it surprise to them then do you think?*

I think so because I hadnae cracked a light, I'd never said a thing. You know and amongst everything I was concentrating on my wee child and it was, I mean that's was the thing, everything was great, everything was really nice apart from this person and by that point he was away most of the time anyway. So that's kind of, I was sort of living my own life anyway but it was very strange because there was a lot of things I had to do and that would get checked up on and everything. So although he wasn't there and he couldn't see me phoning removal vans and all of this. I also had a big list of orders that I had to carry out and fulfil and do stuff when I got home from, you know, say my work and my baby things I was doing and then I would have to go back and you know carry out all these, it was like I was an employee. He was working away and I was living in the house minding the child, it, it was like I was a live in nanny you know so he went away and did anything he wanted to do but I was home you know he had somebody watching the house, somebody paying the bills, somebody doing all the just house-y admin, keeping everything going and he would just come and go as he liked. Um and that's fine because people have different living arrangements or they work away for a bit or whatever but basically I just was kind of left with everything and I had lists of things I had to do. But a lot of it was stuff for him and his work and all this rubbish and I remember one time coming back in from being out a walk with, or being out with **[name of son anonymised]** somewhere, he was literally a baby at that point, he wasn't long out kind of thing, and I was leaking and he was screaming and you know it was like 'argh' and then got in and the phone was going 'hello' and it was him and the baby's crying and my head's sore and he's 'have you done? have you done that?' and I'm like 'yes' crying, I need to go and feed him, well you need to find this first. And I had to go find a payslip and find some wee tiny section on this payslip that he wanted a number from. He was obsessed with money. Absolutely obsessed with money. **[name of son anonymised]**'s still in the pram screaming his head off. I cannae think. And oh it was just awful and I'm going 'is it this bit, is it that bit?', 'no urgh, urgh'. So I'm getting ranted at down the phone but I was hurting because my baby was screaming and I, you know, and then it ended up he was really horrible, really, really, really horrible on the phone that time and so then next day it's like wee mini acts of rebellion I didn't phone him. And the next day oh my god I didn't phone him I'm going to get pelters for that. But I thought I just cannae, I just can't, I can't. And I think I left it about two days and then I phoned

him up and it was like 'hello' and I think he was a wee bit surprised that I'd phoned. And he knew he'd kinda mucked up. Um.

**00:27:35** *So did things change when you had a baby then?*

Nah he was just always horrible.

*But in terms of how you reacted? You know it sounded like you were obviously really tired because you are when you have a baby and did that?*

Yeah. Oh right. Mmm I was just tired all the time. Tired all the time. But most people are I think when they have a baby.

*But did that change? Because you said you didn't phone him for a couple of days, was that a bit of a change in behaviour for you then?*

Yes because I had to phone him every day. He was working away and he was, he was living in Bristol, I think at that point. Working at his company and they were paying, they paid his accommodation, his bills and all that. The, the only thing they didn't pay was the phone bill. So I had to phone him. He wouldnae even spend money phoning me up. So yeah I had phone him so I had to phone him every day and it was kind of like reporting back what I was doing, and had I done this, had I done that. We wouldn't sit and chew the fat or carry on or just you know, it was like a report, it was like calling in um and I would get quizzed. Even that was exhausting just have I done this, it was yeah. It's like living with a really angry boss. So.

*You described leaving and then going back after a couple of days.*

Oh yeah.

*So did he, he'd obviously noticed you'd left, what was his reaction like?*

Um it was all the tears, all the urgh, I'm sorry and all of this. And ironically I think that, it really, I left twice, the second time was when I actually got away, that was with my baby and my handbag. Before all of that I'd actually gone the length of packing up stuff for a weekend but ended up I didn't leave. And then the next time I took stuff to my friend's house blah de blah, I went away at the weekend or just went away, up back up to family, um but then he got me on the phone and it was all

the tears and all of that and so I went back and then it was about another year and a half after that we left for good. And we've never, and we you know that was it. So.

**00:29:55** *And what was your family, you came up to family then that time that you left and went back, what was their reaction?*

Actually I stayed with my friend for a few days because I wasn't deciding to leave at that point. It was just that I need to tell him it's over but I don't want to be around when I say it because he'll just go mad and I don't know what he'll do. And he'll try and talk me out of it but I'm determined that I'm not gonnae, you know, I can't be around him. So I hadn't decided to leave Darlington or to come back home or come back to Glasgow but I'd just decided I need to be out of the house while I tell him that I've got another house. It was in Darlington, it was across the town um but I can't be around when I tell him that because I literally don't know what he'll do. But he has to know that this is it, this is done, I'm serious. Um but he got me on the phone. I can't remember how. Because I knew I couldn't, I knew, I knew he would try and find me and I didn't want to talk to him because I knew he would try and talk me out of it um and I didn't want to be talked out of it. I wanted to just stay away until certain arrangements were made and then come back and let, you know, whatever. Um because I thought right now is not the time to make big decisions, I'll just go so it's clear right that's us separated and we'll just do our own thing, get on with our own lives and sort everything out. So that's really all it was at that point but um yeah I was going to go away, that was it, I was going to go away for the weekend or a few days or something and then come back down, pick up the keys to the other place and go and stay there with **[name of son anonymised]**. Um but he, when I say go back he actually got me on the phone and persuaded me to go back home to him. So I was coming back to Darlington but to pick up the keys and go to this other place I'd arranged. But he got me on the phone and convinced me oh let's try again and urgh all of that. Um so I did, I went back and actually for a few weeks, for about six weeks, it was nice. It was really good. It was like 'oh I'll be better and how can you forgive me' um and I felt quite you know big like um it'll be alright and da-de-da and then within about six weeks or so it got even worse. It was worse. I was so chastised for leaving, 'how dare you da-de-da-de-da'. I took, I'd take it, I'd left pretty much everything apart from my own personal stuff and **[name of son anonymised]**'s little baby bits and pieces, I left the telly, the hi-fi, the this, I mean the hi-fi (laughter), um everything, anything, everything I left I took my clothes and stuff for **[name of son anonymised]**. His baby equipment and things. Um but seemingly that was too much. And then it became a case of every time his eyes landed on something, 'I can't believe you

took that', 'I can't believe you took that', 'why did you take that?'. And I'm like 'well it's **[name of son anonymised]**'s'. And that still annoyed him. And then it became a case of every time his eyes landed on something, 'I can't believe you took that', 'I can't believe you took that', 'why did you take that?'. And I'm like 'well it's **[name of son anonymised]**'s'. And that still annoyed him. And one thing that I remember that he was super annoyed about was um the, we had a wee fluffy dog, a wee collie dog, Jet was her name, I loved her, I used to take her up to the hills and cry into her fur when I got a row. I loved my wee dog. So yeah my wee dog came on the train with us up to, to Glasgow. Um so there was me and **[name of son anonymised]** and a kind of bag or two, a couple of bags because the rest of the stuff was in my friend's house and me and **[name of son anonymised]** and the wee dog and the guy on the train was really good, oh I love your dog and all this, and that was great. They let me sit in first class with my wee fluffy dog and my baby. So that was fine. Um but when I went back he was going 'I can't believe you took our little dog' and I was like well I wasn't going to leave her you know because I didn't know, he was due back that day but I thought you know he works away so I'll need to take the dog because we're going to go to the new house and he isn't here all week, he's not here for weeks on end, so of course I'll take the wee doggie. So wee Jet came up the road with me on the train and that was nice and then when I was going, when I went back um he said 'I can't believe you took our little dog'. But then you see when we left for good with my baby and my handbag um I left everything because I hadn't intended to leave that day. I'd gone out the house, talked to my sister, various things, and then **[name of son anonymised]** and I took a taxi to Glasgow so I didn't go back to the house because the wee dog was in the house. Um so I remember him saying at one point um 'I can't believe you left our little dog'. And I'm like well the last time I left you gave me a row for taking her, now you don't why I left her. But it was kind of illustrative of the whole thing. You would do one thing, oh that's all wrong so you'd do the other thing 'what did you do that for?'. So your head was just constantly you know your brain was fried the whole time. Just a chasing around trying to do what he wanted you to do that wasn't right anyway. Moving goalposts the whole time. I think one of the things about it was that you don't know, you don't realise you're just permanently exhausted and it's trying to fulfil all their ridiculous demands all the time. That becomes the centre of your life and it's amazing how debilitating that can get. I was just exhausted. Yeah and um yeah so that was a couple of times in my life, the second time we stayed away so that was fine.

**00:36:14** *And what happened the second time then? What was the kind of trigger for that? Because you said you hadn't planned to?*

I knew we were going to leave because it got even worse. It was now about six weeks or so as I say and it was then about eighteen months later that was us away for good. So I knew it was literally, but I thought I don't regret going back you know we went away and then he talked me into going back because I knew, I thought if I hadn't of went back I'd have always have wondered what would have happened if. Was he going to change? Was he going to fix all these things that he said he would fix? And um I always would have wondered. You know and then at some point I might have kind of gone back to him. But it got worse and worse and worse and worse and worse, it was unbelievable how much trouble I was in, you know, I was in trouble, I was the naughty one, oh gosh, getting a row and all this. And, but it got worse and worse and worse and by that point I knew that at some point in the next year we were totally out of here, that's it, it's just a matter of time. Um and by then he was working abroad. He was in the Dominican Republic at that point. And he had been for quite a while. He'd been in Hong Kong. He'd been everywhere. He'd been Middle East, you name it. So I was kind of on my own most of the time anyway so I had the wee baby, living on my own with a baby and working. But when he came back it was just horrific. And but he was working abroad so all my, I was working as a schoolteacher by that time which is a hugely pressurised job, absolutely loved it, but it's exhausting. That was fine because I liked what I was doing. Um but he was working, I think Dominican Republic, like there was loads of places he worked but I think that particular period of time it was the Dominican Republic and the story was yeah and you and **[name of son anonymised]** can come out and live with me and all, you know, I'll go and you come out at the appropriate point. But it was him that was going to decide when the time was right and all of this. So I was working as a schoolteacher, dropped **[name of son anonymised]** off at the childminders, carry on in my car to the school, pick him up at the end of the day, go home and then in the holiday, when it was school holidays, school teaching absolutely exhausting but in a good way and so it'd be the holidays and everybody be like I'm going here or I'm doing this and I would have to go home, pack a massive big bag, go to the airport with **[name of son anonymised]**, get a plane, which was like a 24 hour journey, Dominican Republic, jet lag, all the rest, spend the holiday with him, all the way back on the plane, and then go back to work. And that was when I really did get a sense of just being completely isolated because I knew, like he was the one that lived there, I was entirely dependent on him because I didn't drive there, I didn't have a car, I didn't know my way around, it was all in Spanish, I didn't talk the language, um the customs and everything were just so different, there was police all over the place, it was quite a, it was a like sort of a touristy place but in the nice touristy bits the

beaches but other than that it it's pretty wild you know. So I thought I'm kinda stranded. I need to do what he says. I need to yeah but anyway the story was, or the story that I was spun was, yeah come out here and live with me um so that was it and he was saying this is how, his work were paying for the accommodation, it was a wee house kind of thing and he was showing me round going this will be **[name of son anonymised]**'s room and all this and then I would go back after the holidays and he would say 'do you know what, no don't come out the now it's not the right time'. I'd be like right okay because I was thinking actually it is a big move, it's a big decision. Right okay, alright that's fine I'll just go back to school and da-de-dah and do all that. And then it was like right you really need to look into it now and so I was having to make all these arrangements. I even got somebody in to look round our house in Darlington to rent, you know, we were going to rent like me and **[name of son anonymised]** move out there, we were going to rent the house, rent it out and everything so I had to get the people in to value it, to do all this paperwork and stuff. **00:40:58** So I'd done all of that and then he was like right Easter time and all that come out. So I put in my resignation to the school. Oh no I didn't, I'd said to the head I'm gonnae leave um and then I went out there for the holiday and he says d'you know what it's not the right time. And I said but I've told the head I'm leaving what do you want me to do? Untell her? And he went yeah. Like I was being sarky, I was being clever, what do you want me to do? You know untell her? Because I didn't know if he was serious . What do you want me to do? Untell her? I told her I'm resigning. And he was like yeah. And I went okay. So then I thought yet again he still doesnae want to live with his wife and child. But actually was quite relieved that I didn't have to make the move because I didn't really want to. I thought that will be quite exciting for a while but och I was already exhausted anyway with the baby and the job and this, that, and the other and I thought I couldn't be bothered. So I was kind of relieved. But then I had to go back to the school after the holiday and tell the teacher, tell the head, um you know what I said before well actually we're just going to stay, and she says oh that's fine there's nothing in writing so don't worry about that. Absolutely okay no problem. Um but then it happened again. And that time I'd already put in my resignation in writing etc. etc. So I said what do you want me to do then? And he went well you'll just need to get another job. So that basically you know I'd moved my whole life down to there to be with him in the first place, within a month of that I'd transgressed, I think I left the cooker on or something, and that was another 'well so and so is got a job in Dubai and that's it I'm going to Dubai'. So after a month of me moving down he went to Dubai. And then he went to Bristol two months before **[name of son anonymised]** was born. So I did all the having the baby thing on my own. Then a wee while after that he went to the Dominican Republic and, oh no I forgot

I've missed out Hong Kong, that's a whole other story. But then he went out there to work and then it was oh come and live with me. So I made various arrangements, told the head I'm leaving, nah nah it's not the right time. And then he said right now's the right time. So I said right okay. So I put my resignation in writing. And then he went no, no it's not the right time. So basically I'd been trotting about following him about and I thought how long am I going to have to follow him about the world before he actually decides that we will be in the same place at the same time? But by then you know I'd already left him and went back and all the rest. And I just thought right I'm just absolutely exhausted. Following him, it was like a horrible, mad treasure hunt, scary gameshow where you've got to do all these random tasks at all odd hours that don't connect to anything that might be totally different to what he told you last week. Um and your head oh and that whole time you're looking after your baby and you're holding down your job and you're sorting the house out and you're, they keep you so exhausted that you can't possibly do anything else apart from keep them happy that that becomes so exhausting in itself and one day I just I can't and I think when I really decided that we were going to leave or just made the decision we need to leave, not as in when, but we need to stop this, this is not happening, we're done, we're completely done, I don't care what he says or does now, we are done. Um it was after I think when I put my resignation in writing and that was um I think because it's a school thing you have, you can only do it at the beginning or end of a term. And you have to give a term's notice and all that sort of thing. So when I went back in August it was after the summer holidays and put in your resignation, so I did and my resignation was effective from Christmas or something um and then he came back for Christmas and when 'right no it's not the right time'. So I'd packed in my job and I didn't have another one so I thought right okay I'll do a bit of supply teaching. So I signed up with various agencies and then for the whole month of January was all round different schools in the North East and then in February that was when we actually left for good. That sort of situation I've described before with the handbag and all that.

**00:45:24** *Do you want to just describe that then for the sake of the recorder?*

Yeah.

*Is that okay?*

Yeah. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Um where would, I know I'm kind of rambling a wee bit but so just edit it whatever way you want. But um so where do you want me to start from then and I'll just start?

*Just so you had got to that point where you were leaving but you hadn't planned to leave that day?*

That particular day.

*So what happened then that led to it?*

Right. Okay. So yeah he'd come home for Christmas, this was in December and he'd said oh it's not the right time, don't come out. And that was after I'd put in my written resignation. And my job was actually at an end, I'd worked my notice by that point. And then I'm thinking right January oh now I need to go back round and look for jobs and all of this and I'll pack a bag and go out to whatever place. So I thought right do you know what? I really don't care now. I just acted my way through the whole Christmas. I said 'okay, alright, that's fine, I'll just do supply, blah, blah, just let me know when you want me to come out'. And I thought whatever, don't really care now. That's the end. And then, so he came back for Christmas but he spent every night on the phone to somebody out in the Dominican Republic um he would go into the bathroom, make wee secret phone calls, take the dog a walk and take his phone and make phone calls and I thought is he breaking up with me? And I'm going, please, please, please, please, please just tell me you don't want to come back and you've got somebody else over there now. Just going to please, please, please, please. And he just wouldn't, he just wouldn't. Um he didn't know I was thinking that. Maybe did, I have no idea. So he spent the entire Christmas ignoring me and my child but we had to traipse about round town after him because he was buying presents for everybody he knew back there. But he didn't buy our son a single thing. I'd be like what about that? What about that? And he'd be oh whatever. So I bought **[name of son anonymised]** one thing, a wee plastic guitar that cost £10. He didn't buy him a thing. That whole afternoon around town buying stuff for all the people he knew back there. Anyway, so I drove him to the airport when he had to go back again and I'm like if I can just keep going until I get him back on the plane. Come on, hurry up, hurry up. So drove to the airport and he was standing and he said 'so was that Christmas okay for you?'. I think he knew that he'd pretty much ignored us and we'd actually hadn't had any rows or anything because I think at that point, it was kind of like he couldn't be bothered and neither could I. But he didn't want to be the one that split us up. I had to be the bad person that made the decision to say I'm leaving. Um that, that's what I think of it now. At the time I just, I just wanted it done. I didn't really care anymore. And I was just pretty, I was glad he just pretty much left us alone the whole Christmas because it was quite a quiet Christmas. It was

kind of peaceful in a very strange way because I didnae get a row, I didnae get into trouble, I didnae get shouted at. I maybe did here and there but it wasn't anything really. But I think because he'd dropped the bombshell knowing that I'd resigned in writing and he came back and said no you can't come out and live with me. So he left us alone. And we were at the airport and he said was that an okay Christmas? And I was like 'yeah, yeah it was nice and quiet'. Because it was. It was very quiet and that was good. And that was a massive improvement and I'm like gonna just get on the plane, gonna just get on the plane. **00:49:09** So he got on the plane and then a day or two later I was down the town centre with my son and we were looking at, I was looking at, I was in Boots the Chemist, it was in that story in the paper, um not story that was just as I described it, we were in Boots the Chemist and I was looking at some stuff on the bottom shelf so I was kind of crouching down and just looking and **[name of son anonymised]**'s standing like a wee small child and we were at eye level. I was crouched down and he was looking and he had his wee waggy finger and he went 'mummy next time daddy says, no next time daddy shouts at you, I'm going to say no daddy, stop it'. And he was looking at me like that and oh I just thought my baby is protecting me here and I've never, I can't describe how I felt. My three year old, he's protecting me, he knows daddy shouts at me and he's going to tell his daddy to stop shouting at his mummy. And I thought right that's it, I can block out as much as I like but my baby is making memories here. And that's the end. That's it. And I thought he's away, he's not even in the country, I'm just going to do it. That's it. So yeah so we made some plans and going back to the Women's Aid leaflet thing I knew that you know some things that would be a good idea to do, it was about your documents and all of that as well and have somewhere to put some stuff and so we did all of that and I'd already seen the lawyer because I had seen her before when I'd try to, when we'd left before and went back, she was you know, I called her up after and said look we're going to try and work it out and you know and she's like you know that, that's good to hear, let me know how it goes and everything and good luck and thanks for letting me know. So a year and a bit and I contacted her again and guess what, me again, this is us now. So I'd made all these plans. I'd stashed the documents. I had got some stuff for me and **[name of son anonymised]**. I had, we had a place to go which was my sister's. She'd said we could come and live with her, back up here. Um so we'd done all of that. And I was in touch with the lawyer again and everything was set basically. So that's a wee bit of background. So on the day we left I hadn't intended to leave other than I knew it was imminent and it was at the point where I've just got to phone the lawyer to tell her to take the paper, the divorce papers round. So he come back after Christmas. I was working in the school and let me think, yeah, he came back because we'd been on

the phone. That was it. We were on the phone, he was away out in that country, I was here and um yeah, it was this thing where I had to phone him so the phone bill's away sky high because I phoned the Dominican Republic every day. So that was another thing. Um and he was going on he was like 'oh yeah and the greenhouse and how about we...' and I'm like 'this is wait a minute before you make too many plans here, I need to tell you something, just we're leaving, I've just had enough, I cannae do this anymore, it's really not working, that's it'. And he said 'oh are you sure?' and I'm like 'well uh-ah yeah it's you know, that is it, that's it'. And he went 'now here's what to do' and 'I was like okay, now don't panic' and I'm sitting there going, by that time I thought I don't care, we're out of here, that's it, don't care, I've gone through what will we do and should we leave and should we stay and I think once you decide that relieves so much pressure because you kind of know what you're gonnae do. It's the deciding. So I knew we were going to go and so when he was saying 'now don't panic' and I'm going, I was so calm because I thought you know and I'd gone back, we'd tried again, all of that and I was just so sure by that point that was it and I said 'look' and he went 'now don't panic, now just, this is what to do, you listening now, go down the travel agent, get a round the world ticket, I don't care how much it costs' and bearing in mind he was completely obsessed by money, obsessed. Um 'I don't care what it costs, just come out, bring **[name of son anonymised]**, come out and we'll sort it all out'. **00:53:49** And I said 'well I don't need to come out and we will sort it all, it's totally fine, we'll work everything out properly, no problem at all but um I'm not coming out, you know, because I', I knew that if I went out there after I've told him we're leaving and I've got my child then who knows what is going to happen? You know at his mercy 100% so I said, and that was the other thing, that was the Women's Aid leaflet thing, by that point I knew about isolation and, and I'd seen it a wee bit more objectively as well like not just reading about it on a leaflet, I'd experienced a lot of that by then or recognised it for what it was. I was away you know away from my family but I had a nice wee life and it was fine, but I was away from my family and I wasn't allowed to see them but you know everything was my life was okay, I just couldn't see my family. Um and then it was he went away abroad to work so he wasn't here but he was still barking orders down the phone, checking up on me. And then he went away to a foreign country and said come and live and then I packed my job in and he said don't come, then he said do it now, so I packed my job properly and then he said don't come. And so, and I'm thinking now he wants me, by that point I thought forget it, forget it. And it was that, that's what I mean it was that information, that knowledge that's just so powerful because I could have got on a plane and went over there. He could have took **[name of son anonymised]** a walk one day and just bloody left me. And that would have

been it. I would not have, I wouldn't have been, I wouldn't have any money, I wouldn't have the language and I'm thinking if he's got my passport what am I, you know I am literally at his mercy. And by then I knew that that cannae happen. So, so he's going round the world ticket and all of that and I said no but we need to sort it out properly, let's just you know make sure everything happens properly and we'll sort it all out. Um and I was adamant I wouldn't go and he said 'right, I'll come over'. And I said 'good, okay'. No he says 'I'll come over and we'll talk and we'll sort it all out' and I said, I said 'well we'll talk but there's nothing, I'm not going to change my mind, it's not gonnae be to talk should we or shouldn't we, that's already decided but you'll know we'll make all the arrangements, that's fine if you want to come back, you know we can do it by email' because email had been invented by that point. Um but he said no he would come back so I had to go to the airport to pick him up. That was awful. Drove back, pure silence. And he, he kept trying to, so basically he came back but I was work and so I was going to work every day and leaving **[name of son anonymised]** with him. He would take the baby to the nursery because he was in nursery by that point. So for, so that's, the week leading up to the day we left, it was a Friday when we left. 1st February. And I knew we were going soon because everything was all set up with the lawyers, everything else um and we were going to my sister's but then he came back and I thought that is gonnae make it a lot harder because now he knows we are actually leaving and I don't know how he is going to react. **00:57:22** So he came back and that week was just the scariest week of my whole life. I don't know how we got through it. Because every day I would go to work and I would come back and I had no idea if my child would be there or what he'd be up to or what you know. It was my ultimate fear was that he would still my wee baby. So every day I had to go to work and I thought right if I've got the passports he can't take **[name of son anonymised]** anywhere. He might take him somewhere but he can't leave the country and at least that some kind of protection. So I went to work every day with my passport and **[name of son anonymised]**'s passport in my bag. And then one day I came home and he went 'where's the passports?' and I'm thinking why is he even looking for them? Why does he want my passport or **[name of son anonymised]**'s? Because you know we've not to go out there and live with him so why, why, why does he want to know where my passport is? So I thought why is he even looking for them? And he went 'where's the passports?' And I thought I could make something up or say I don't know or their lost or the dog ate them or something um but I thought I can't because um he'll get on and on at me till he finds out and by then I thought well I don't really care because I've done my best, I've done what I can, I've taken them out of the house every day, he's going to find them anyway. So I said well they're in my bag and he said I know

because I looked. I thought, you see there was lots of things, he never actually smacked me in the face but he was very creepy, really creepy and he would do things to terrify you. So he was looking through my handbag, he was asking me where the passports are, he was looking in my handbag when I'm out at work and all this and you know, or not when I was out at work, because I was back I'd taken them to work but had come back and there was my handbag in the house so I'd been to the bathroom, I'd been in different rooms, he's rooting through me my handbag. Um so yeah so that whole week and then it was all the waterworks and how can you forgive me? And he would sit on the living room rocking and crying and saying things like 'this will be the end' and all this and I'm going okay I know that's a thing they do from the leaflet and all of that um and I thought but I've been trying to do what he wants for so long and he's said this before and you know I'm not changing, I absolutely was not, there was nothing that was going to make me change my mind at that point. I thought I don't, well fill your boots go and do what you're going to do, I know you're kidding me on anyway but, but then it got so wearing that I just one day pretended I said okay, because he was like try again and all of this, yeah forget it, so I had to pretend to go along with it just for a bit of peace. So he would stop going on at me. Um and then on the Wednesday, no it was the Thursday, it was the Thursday, we went swimming, that was nice. I'd said 'yeah, blah, blah, it's okay, alright we'll try again'. And then he started going on about renewing our vows and all of this. And I thought you've broken every single one you've ever made. And I'm like 'that'll be nice'. It was so hard to smile by that point. And then on the Thursday we went swimming and that was just weird because I thought right I have to work out a new way to get my baby away from him now. I don't know what I'm going to, to do. But we went swimming and we came home and um I think I put **[name of son anonymised]** to bed, I fed him, put him to bed or something, down to the kitchen to you know, starving after the swimming, always hungry after swimming. And I was in the kitchen, big light on and he just pinned me in there and talked at me for literally hours. **01:01:38** I was starving. I was bursting. I was freezing. The heating wasn't on. It was February. Not January, February. Um and I couldn't and he just talked, and talked, and talked at me. I couldn't walk away because he'd be like 'where are you going?'. Um so I was yeah and that was one of the most creepiest, I wouldn't even call it a conversation you know, talkings that we ever had. It was just yeah so renewing our vows and all of this and everybody will know and then he said something about but yes you know I could, he started talking about all the things he could do or do to me but I'm not like that. And I wouldn't do that. And he said, so he was threats basically and one of it was 'well, you know, you and **[name of son anonymised]** you could come out and visit or we'll live there or whatever and I could just take

him a wee walk down the beach one day and just you know, you know what if I don't come back and you wouldn't have any passport, you wouldn't have a job, you wouldn't you know and um but I wouldn't do that, I'm not like that' and I thought what is he warning me about here? What is going, why is he even saying that um and I thought everything just sort of started to turn to liquid inside. I just felt it was like watching a nightmare. So I went to bed, got up the next day, I was going to say to go to work but I wasn't, something else happened that I've forgotten to say, right I was at work that day on the Thursday, this was the day of the swimming and the pinning me down in the kitchen and the running away with your baby and your passport thing. Um but earlier on that day um I had been down town to the lawyers to give them a cheque for the deposit for the, no it was to for them serving the papers kind of thing, so they had the money. The arrangements were all in place and they then had the money and then it was from then anytime on they would go and do it. So I had been down the town to deposit this cheque at the lawyers and then I was driving back to school, it was the lunch break at school, and I thought right they are so getting this cheque. I'm driving back to school and a wee grandpa bumped my car on the roundabout. I'm on the roundabout and he's just, and I thought oh Jesus as if I havnae got enough to do and I thought I'm gonnae need to report this, you can't have a car accident and not report it. So but the worst thing was I had to report it to him. But he was being all magnanimous at that point because I'd agreed to stay with him and he was like 'okay well we'll phone the insurance and we'll phone the police and all of that'. Um and so I had to go down and take my license to the police station, you know the next day or something like that, so that's why I couldn't leave because I had to present myself at a police station and I'm like timing or what?! Oh my god. So that was it. I'd went to work, took the cheque to the lawyers at the lunchtime, did my afternoon's work, came back, played happy families at the swimming, came back, got talked at for hours, went to bed, didn't sleep, got up in the morning thinking 'oh jeez what am I going to do about the car?', so I phoned work and said 'look, bumped the car, can't come in today, need to sort some stuff out' and they were like 'that's fine, thanks for letting us know'. And I thought right okay, so I'll take **[name of son anonymised]** to nursery because if I'm not going to work, I'll drop him off to the nursery um and then I'll phone the lawyer to say look don't take the papers round because I cannae get away today because I'd say I don't want to be there when you know. So dropped **[name of son anonymised]** at the nursery, took the bus down to the town centre, dropped him at the nursery and then I thought I'll go to the station because I always had to think of other places to make phone calls because I couldn't phone them from the house. **01:05:59** So I went to the station and I phoned up the lawyer and I said 'hi it's me, just to say did you get the cheque?' and they were like

'well not yet' and I said 'well, it's I posted it yesterday but I cannae, don't take the papers round today because I need to go to the police, I've bumped the car and all of that and like I'm still here, I don't want to be around when the papers come round so don't do it today' and they said 'that's fine, we're all ready to go, we're just waiting on your call so we'll not do anything until you tell us otherwise but we're all ready when you are just let us know' and I went 'right fine'. And then I thought I'll phone my sister and tell her we cannae come because we'd arranged to go to her house and this was all by texts in the school toilets that I deleted before I got home. So eh, so then I phoned my sister and said I cannae come today and she was like 'oh' and I said 'no, I cannae, I bumped the car' and she said 'well take the train' and I was looking at the, I was in the station looking at the, there was trains up and down to Glasgow all the time and I said I cannae, the train's gone. Because there was one had just gone. And she went 'Dot, you can't go back to that house' because I'd told her a wee bit, I think I'd told her a bit about the night before but she knew enough anyway and she said, she knew all about it, and she said 'you can't go back to that house' and I saw a wee chink of light and I went 'neither I do' and then I went 'but the train's gone' and she went 'get a taxi!' and I said 'but, but, but, I can't get a taxi' and she went 'do you want me to come and get you?' and I thought she bloody well will. She was desperate to get me out of there at that point and I'm glad she was but it was that bit, while I was on the phone and I saw the whole of my future life, like my past, and my future life flashing by thinking he's going to come find me, he's going to take **[name of son anonymised]**, he's going to go mad and I thought do you know actually I can't do this anymore. I can't go back to that house, I just can't. And I realised, **[name of son anonymised]**'s not in the house I don't need to go back to the house. I said, right I'll get a taxi. I'm coming. Tell everyone. And she phoned round our entire family and said change your phone numbers Dot's on the way blah blah blah. Um so then I phoned the lawyer back up and said 'change of plan I'm leaving today, in fact I'm leaving right now'. So 'give me a wee while, wait until the afternoon and then take the papers'. And they said um, they said 'right that's fine um and they said do you have a photo of him, we need a photo, just to make absolutely sure we've got the right person etc., it's just protocol, it's just part of the process' and I said 'oh I don't have one on me but I'll get one to you'. And so I phoned my sister again and said right we need a photo, does anyone have a photo of him? And so by the underground network of my family up in Glasgow, some were at work and some were at home, some had photos and some didn't, they sorted all that out between them and one of my sisters managed to get hold of a photo that she took into work and got scanned and emailed to my lawyers.

**01:09:10** So that was all going on while I was going to the nursery to pick up my son. But I went to

the taxi rank first and said 'right do you go to Glasgow?' and he went 'do we go to Glasgow?' shouting over at his mates and they were like 'aye but you need to get the money first kind of thing' because they'd been diddled a few times and I was like okay fair enough and he said 'that's fine but I need to rearrange a school run'. He did all that and I said 'well can we stop off at the nursery first?' so we stopped off at the nursery and I said 'oh it's **[name of son anonymised]**'s mum, I forgot that he's got the doctors this morning, is it okay if I take him out?' and they were like 'aye of course, he's in **[name anonymised]** class, just go and get him'. So there he was. They were all sitting in a wee circle, the wee kids and I says to his teacher '**[name of son anonymised]**'s got the doctor, I forgot, is it okay if he comes with me now?', 'aye, **[name of son anonymised]** go with your mum'. So I took him by the hand and we're walking down the nursery and he went 'mummy I don't want to go to the doctor's' and I said, 'well, do you want to go and see Auntie Molly then?' and he said 'okay'. So I got in the car, the taxi, um yeah and it's heading out of town and we lived on the main road out of town and I'm like, he's going to go that way, I know he is because it's the main way out of town on the motorway, I know he is, and we actually passed the house, so I'm going 'oh I need to tie my shoelace!' and I did that thing where you duck down below the window and I thought if he looks out the window, I'm like oh my god. It was quite scary. And there was **[name of son anonymised]** sitting there. His wee chunky jumper on and his wee, he had a wee lunchbox with an apple and a drink in it. But I felt so relieved. So relieved. I thought I don't need to go back there. I don't need to go back there. And a lot of things just melted away. I knew I was in for a hard, hard time. But the hardest bit was done. And that was it. Taxi up to Glasgow. But we got out, we got out in London Road because I thought right, I don't want this taxi driver from Darlington to know where I'm going so I'll just say 'right, we'll just get out here thanks'. So he might know we went to Glasgow but and then I just flagged down another black taxi and off we went to my sister's house. So. Yeah. So that was how I did it that day.

*Thank goodness.*

Yeah. Yeah.

**01:11:33** *Thank goodness for your sister, eh?*

Yeah. Yeah. Well that's the thing, my family are great, they always have been. But it's not just oh Dot's in trouble let's help, they were just like that, it goes round and round, this is why, like my dad is

my sister's now babysitting because she had to work late but um he doesn't want to drive in the dark so I'll go and get him and take him home to his house so my sister's gets the babysitting done but my dad doesn't have the stress of driving in the dark and basically we'll all do anything for any of us that, you know, that's just how we are. But that's another criticism, 'people bend over backwards doing stuff for you' and I'm like yeah, that's a problem uh-ah. You know everything was wrong, everything about me, all the people I knew, he hated everyone, he had a name of every single one of my friends and family, some derogatory name and he would go round and you know this and that and so very quickly you learn what you can and can't talk about and what's going to set him off. So then you stop saying stuff so then you get a row because you're boring or you don't communicate and you know you feel yourself disappearing in this big spiral. And after all those times of, you know, he went away, moved away and came back and then went abroad and all of this and then it was come out and live with us, no don't, right come out now, no definitely don't, and I thought right I can't keep doing this for the rest of my life and I knew that his mum was scared of him as well. She was great. He's from Wales and so is she and all of that, you know he'd been living, working in the North East of England for a good few years by then um but his wee old mum was down in Wales and we'd always go and see her and she'd come up and stay and all of this and we were pally, she was lovely, lovely and she loved her wee grandson but she would say to me things like 'now don't tell him, you know what he's like' and all this and he would shout at her and when people came to the house, his pals or something, or somebody was coming for something or other, he would tell her to stay in her room because I think he thought she was embarrassing or something or she wasn't the sort of person that he would want to be associated with. I've no idea, he told his mum to stay in the room and don't get seen and all this and I thought d'you know that is me in thirty years' time. I cannae do this. So yeah. But from the taxi flying up the road to the motorway I literally have never looked back. Never. I've never regretted it for one second. It's kind of like when I got my life back. It was a different life from the one I'd planned for a good few years because we had to do all the contact things. And it's only really in pretty recent years that I've realised, again through Women's Aid and other organisations I've come into contact with or just you know looking for other support sort of groups and stuff, that they get at you through contact with the child. And I actually, I think it's only really, really, really recently that I've properly realised that. Because **[name of son anonymised]** turned eighteen in May and that was always like my dream was just to get him to sixteen or eighteen so that his dad can't do a single thing to him or not legally anyway. And **[name of son anonymised]** will be big enough to just do his own thing and not have, not get taken anywhere and he's got a voice and all that. So that

actually has been very, very, very hard over the last few years and I didn't anticipate that. You're so focused on getting away and you don't really think about what happens next because you don't really care, it's just I've got to get away. And I thought I don't care if I haven't got anything, I don't care, I've got my son, that's it, what'll happen will happen, I'll do what I can but everything we can do will be better than what was happening. So it didn't really matter, I didn't really think about after. But I did have a lot of good support. I had my family. I had Women's Aid by then. I also got in touch with various other organisations when I came back to Glasgow and was in touch with WISE women for a long time. They're brilliant also and the Support Project and other things like that and you learn so much and you meet so many fabulous people and you just get believed and it's just such a relief to not pretend stuff anymore.

**01:15:53** *So you got in touch with Women's Aid when you moved back then?*

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I didn't contact them down in Darlington when I lived there, my, my sort of experience of them really was just reading information and leaflets but it was hugely powerful. Because I knew some of the things that you just shouldn't do like don't let you know that isolation thing, there's no way I'm getting up and going to Dominican Republic after telling him I'm leaving, you know. So there was all of that. That, that was absolutely key. And then when we came up here um I was looking in the phone book, remember phone books, it wasn't, this was in 2002 so it's not, it's kind of a good while ago but it's, you know, internet was invented by then but pretty much everything was still really paper-based and so I was looking through the phone book for just you know who can help with all of this. Because I knew again through Women's Aid that there are organisations who can help. So I was just sitting with the phone book one day and looking through and I found I think it might have been Women's Support Project so I phoned them up and they said we'll send you a pile of information and they did and I looked through all of that and then there was a thing about WISE women and this group in Glasgow that does work with women of one kind and another and so I phoned them and I said I'd like to go on a confidence-building course and they said right we'll put you on the list and when something comes up we'll let you know. And then they contacted me not long after that saying well we've got a course coming up but it's actually personal safety and confidence building, are you still interested? And I said, on my own with a wee child in Glasgow, eh aye [laughter] definitely. So that was brilliant and I met so many more people through that and yeah uh-ah that opened up a whole load of other doors for me and everything else. But through WISE women I met **[name anonymised]** who's the absolute brains behind the operation and

the heart and soul of it, she's wonderful, and her partner **[name anonymised]** worked, or still does as far as I know, but I haven't seen her for a long time now, supporting children with women through Women's Aid. So we got to be pals and everything like that and um they were really, really, really helpful. And just helping me chew over things and decide what to do about stuff because I was getting all the rubbish about contact and money at that point you know and stupid demands and everything, so they were really helpful just helping me think through and talk through some of that and decide on what to do. Um and yeah so through them I became aware of that Women's Aid support children as well and I thought by then there was stuff going on with **[name of son anonymised]**. **[name of son anonymised]** was fine, he was totally fine, but I knew he was going through stuff and he knew he was worrying about things and he had to go and do the visits and all of this. Poor wee soul. And um I always, always, always throughout his wee small years and then growing up years and teenage years, I always, always had to try and dissect out is he upset because of his dad or is he just at it or is he just being a toddler or is he just being a normal wee boy and just being naughty about something? But I always had to try and work out and I couldn't, I tried as hard as I could to just not automatically put it down to well you've got a horrible dad and you're being affected, it's like well he's just a kid as well, he's always, always, always still a kid. Um and that's where **[name anonymised]** was very helpful and anyway just made me aware that they also have services for children and all of that. So through that I then contacted Women's Aid, filled in a form and then **[name of son anonymised]** had a support worker for quite a while. I think it was almost a full year at school. I think was he in primary, no it was primary school. **01:19:54** Yeah and he had this brilliant support worker. She was great. She would come maybe every two or three weeks or something, take him out of class, she'd just come to the school and they'd go into another room and they would talk for about an hour and then she would phone me after to just kind of tell me how it had went. Not, it was all confidential, which was great because I thought he needs to know he can say anything he wants and it won't get back to me. But she would phone me up and just say that it had all gone fine or whatever or this was when they were going to be meeting again or something like that um and over the course of that year I really noticed, it was quite noticeable on **[name of son anonymised]**, he would start saying more things to me but he would be a bit more assured, he would be a bit more confident and one of the, one of the things this was really horrible, I didn't find out until after, until quite a while after, part of the contact arrangements involved phone calls because his dad he came back to live here by then, well down in Darlington, um and there was phone contact but I gradually realised he's, he's stalking me through that. **[name of son**

**anonymised]** was getting quizzed on all sorts. So much so that I had and **[name of son anonymised]** would just get upset and he would, when the phone went, um it was a mobile because I didn't want him having my house number and **[name of son anonymised]** would take the phone and run away into another room and shut the door and I said **[name of son anonymised]** no, don't but Daddy says I have to be on my own and I thought I got really worried and I thought I don't like this so I ended up recording the phone calls and I know you're not meant to do that or else you can but you can't use it for anything or whatever but I thought well I need to know what's being said so that I can figure out how to help **[name of son anonymised]**. And through recording phone calls or putting the speaker phone on and **[name of son anonymised]** didn't know it was the speaker phone, chatting away to his Daddy and his Daddy was like all this stuff and I remember one day **[name of son anonymised]** saying something like, it's like 'so what did you get to eat and what, what?' and so **[name of son anonymised]**'s rhyming off the answers to all the questions and it was like sausages like that he had for his dinner. 'Sausages? Right that's it I'm definitely getting you to come live with me now' [laughter]. I'd fed him sausages, I was such a crap mother. You know, so the whole time, I gradually realised he's actually trying to get **[name of son anonymised]** to come and live with him, which I knew about anyway because he'd keep saying it and emails through the lawyer but then I realised he may not have much of a chance of you know because of **[name of son anonymised]** had always, always, always been with me from day one when his father was driving about the world, that's fine, a lot of people do that but this was, I know what's a normal living situation and what's an abusive living situation so it's not, it's not the living abroad, it's all the things wrapped around that. And so I've lost my thread, where was I? What was I saying?

**01:23:11** *About the phone calls.*

Phone calls. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's right. Yeah so um so what he was doing was I figured out and then heard it on the calls and everything, but what, what his dad was doing during that whole time was trying to get custody of **[name of son anonymised]** through getting into **[name of son anonymised]**'s head and instructing **[name of son anonymised]** to tell me that he wanted that. So I think he kind of knew he didn't have much chance going down the lawyer route because I was **[name of son anonymised]**'s, I was there the whole time while he was here, there and everywhere so you know there was a consistency and all of that and um but I was always worried that some decision would go the other way anyway obviously. But what he did to increase his own chances was to get **[name of son anonymised]** to tell me that he wanted to so that this would become part of the

landscape and oh well if this is what the child wants. Um but he was coaching **[name of son anonymised]** to say that and he called it, he had a name for it, he called it helping Daddy. And he would say 'are you still helping Daddy?' and so when I started putting the phone calls on speaker I thought what's this helping Daddy thing? Um and he would say 'now remember you have to tell it every day, you have to tell it every day' and what it was, was **[name of son anonymised]** was being instructed to tell me that he wanted to go and live with his Daddy. And **[name of son anonymised]** would get really upset, he would tell me that he would say that, he would follow the instructions, 'I want to go and live with my Dad' and I would say 'but you're not old enough yet, you can't **[name of son anonymised]**, you need to stay here a bit longer' and he'd be like 'well okay'. Because he'd done what he was told, he'd told me, he'd said, he'd given his line, I want to go and live and I'd say well not yet and that satisfied him for a long time and then he would be, he was getting pressurised and pressurised so then he would, I would say 'well not yet, you're not old enough' and he'd go 'well when then?' and then it was he would say 'but then I'll have to go to court and I'll have to talk to people and Daddy'll be angry' and I'm like Jesus he should not be worrying about this. **01:25:31** Why is his father you know, why does he do this to his own child? Um and **[name of son anonymised]** was getting so worried, he was under so pressure, um and it was coming out in all sorts of funny ways. He wet the bed at some point, he was, you know, he would throw things, he would shout but it was kind of out of panic. It wasn't, but I don't know what it was but he was angry for quite a while but he was only wee and I handled everything but a lot of the times it would be um I think I was talking to somebody from WISE women or somebody else and I'm like look he keeps, like if **[name of son anonymised]** was having a tantrum I would have to go out of the room and shut the door or I would go into the bathroom and just lock the door and let **[name of son anonymised]** have his and I'm like this is silly I used to lock myself away from his dad. I used to go into the bathroom and lock the door to get away from his rages. Why am I doing this now? This is my child. This isn't right. But they said no this is fine, you, you, if he's angry and all of this it's absolutely fine to separate yourself from him for a bit, he has to learn that this isn't going to get him anywhere. Um so basically yeah he had a lot of anger and I'm thinking how can I help him because I can't take all this worry away. I don't, so then the Women's Aid support thing came into play and that was absolutely brilliant because it really, really, really helped **[name of son anonymised]** to see that he's not, he's not a pawn in anyone's game, he's his own wee person. He's got a right, he's got rights and he's got a right to say what he wants and to have a life and to, I don't what they discussed or how they discussed it or anything like that and that doesn't matter, I don't need to know nor want to know or anything um

but **[name of son anonymised]** I think gradually started to believe that he actually had a say in things and he was under, this helping Daddy thing it was just so awful and eventually started saying. I remember one time he said to me um he said 'mummy I want to go and live with my dad but you know why I'm saying that, don't you?' which was right I've been told to say it, I'm only saying because I've been told to say it, and now I've said it so I can't get into trouble but you know I don't mean it kind of thing. Well that's how I interpreted it but that, that's really how it came over. I want to go and live with Dad but you know why I'm saying that, don't you? And that was him trying to reassure me again and I thought oh God the wee soul. So the Women's Aid support, the children's support worker was absolutely brilliant because I think it relieved a lot of tension for him and it actually as I say I don't know the details of any conversations they had but eventually **[name of son anonymised]** was able to say to his dad and it was like a massive big thing **[name of son anonymised]** told me and he was all excited but he was scared as well, and he said I'm just going to tell him and he said his dad a text and said I don't want to come and live with you. And he went, mum I've sent it. And he was really scared and really proud of himself. And I thought he now has the confidence to do that. Because he was like me for a long, long time running around trying to keep his dad happy, um yeah so.

**01:29:21** *And do you have any contact with Women's Aid now or is that all...?*

I don't really but only because you know the last few years have been trying to work and all sorts of other things and just concentrating on **[name of son anonymised]** but when he was getting support from the worker they would, she would bring him a present, you know a Christmas present, they do this for all the kids, it's lovely, they all get a present and it sounds like just a wee thing but it's, it's massive and I think it was either while **[name of son anonymised]** was still getting supported or not long after that um came to an end, I thought bloody hell we, we're just so lucky, I absolutely really appreciate and people are, I know there's no hierarchy of abuse and I've learned that as well but I'm thinking you know I've got a home, I've got family, there's so many people that don't have that, they only have Women's Aid and I'm so lucky and **[name of son anonymised]**'s so much better now um and I want to do something so I gave them some money, gave them a cheque or you know I donated a bit and stuff here and there. Um but I think the last, now **[name of son anonymised]**'s eighteen and I think, you know, I've got more time for myself now and I'm thinking about all the things that for years and years I've just been concentrating on doing this, doing this, doing this, for years it was like and then it was just making sure **[name of son anonymised]** was okay and going to work but we

had the whole lawyer thing and the contact, the money, all of that going on, all through [name of son anonymised]'s teenage years. And that's just been, you know, I've just been busy dealing with everything but everything's fine, I mean I am fine and family and all of that but I realise now how hard it's actually been over the last few years and I, I haven't really thought about that until maybe the last year or so because you're so busy just getting it done, getting it done, getting it done, um so I haven't had contact with Women's Aid as such but through all of those things you know and over all of those years you become a lot more aware of stuff and then you start seeing things in the papers and the more people you talk to the more you realise just how common this all is and I'm trying to just help and in whatever way I can you know. Yeah because I'm quite open just chatting to people about what's coming because I'm thinking it's not a dirty secret, no, it's not my problem, it's a situation I had to deal with and I've done zero wrong, my wee child even less.

*Well they used to talk about breaking the silence, you know they used to talk about breaking the silence. I think that it's so important that people do talk about if they feel they can.*

Yeah, everybody's different. That's the thing and I just, it's like a wee act of rebellion as well. You might not have believed me but hey shut up. There's folk out there that do. And I think one of the things that really helped me was just knowing that Women's Aid was out there. And I thought it plants a wee seed and it grows and grows and grows. And you don't know when somebody'll pick up that wee seed and plant it somewhere else or just let it grow in themselves and yeah I mean I'm really, really, really lucky and I absolutely appreciate every day just what I've got. I love my wee house. I love everybody although it's just me now. It's, you know, I'm just so lucky and I know there's a lot of people that don't have a lot of the things I have. Um and I do just want to kind of help in some way.

**01:33:08** *Well what would you like to see happen in the future then? Like the opening question, we've been asking, what would you like to see happen in the future in terms of this whole issue of domestic abuse or Women's Aid?*

Um, let me think. Just for it to be seen not as a minority issue or special issue, it's just part and parcel of things people need help with, you know, we've got the NHS, we've got this, we've got that, we've got and it shouldn't be, it should be more visible, more up-front or more part of what people know about that they can access if they need help with something. It should just be a normal thing. But ultimately I suppose what I would really like and what we're never going to get is just for Women's

Aid to be completely disbanded because we don't need them anymore but hey [laughter]. I don't think that will ever happen. But I think anything we can do to drip away at the stigma and all this, you know there was, I was asked if I wanted to, there was, they wanted to do an article in the paper to mark the anniversary of Scottish Women's Aid as well and then I got asked would I, would I be okay about talking to somebody and said yes, sure and so that was in the paper in Sunday and various people have mentioned it to me that I know I haven't gone round and said oh I'm in the paper or anything like that. Um but at work and everything else and didn't really think, it's that thing again I didn't really think about after it was just something I wanted to do and but the amount of conversations I've had about it since, prompted, you know other people are starting with me and my mother-in-law sitting, she comes round every Sunday to see us and she'd seen it and she was, we'd had conversations that we'd never had before, but she's really aware, she worked in pubs for years and years, she's come across all sorts and she now does witness support in the court as a volunteer and she supports you know people who are in court because of domestic abuse cases and things. And you know we had some really good conversations. I think, basically I think that the more people know the, the, I, yeah uh-ah, the less accepted it's going to be because it is, it's you know people still talk about behind closed doors stuff um yeah. And but then you've got to, you have to be careful, you've got to keep yourself safe, everybody will do that in whatever way is right for them. You know you cannae talk about anything when you're planning to leave because then you know that's the most dangerous, another thing I've learned from Women's Aid is that that's the most dangerous time when you're leaving. So you can't announce oh guess what, I'm leaving. You know you've, you've got to keep yourself safe, get away, but by information, I mean just by information in the public you shouldn't have to go and access it somewhere um you know it should just, the information should be available so everybody knows that this isn't right and blah-de-blah-de-blah and then you already know where you can go, you don't, I don't know, I just think it will help if people know. I mean that's so powerful. One of the most powerful things about Women's Aid is that it's just 100% belief. They believe you. You don't need to go through the whole rigmarole of trying to justify why you might need a bit of help. You know they, they, they've got so much background and expertise and they know things before you even tell them and you know they're involved in so many networks that can help practically and with other things as well and yeah. I've no idea whether that answers your question.

**01:37:20** *Oh it does. Is there anything you'd like to add? That's us at the end, just in case.*

Um I don't know, one thing, this is what I've been thinking about over the last few days. I, this isn't a thing about me, it is because obviously you're talking to me and it's been my experience and my child's experience and everything but it's the kind of thing that happens to anyone and everyone and it does and that is a bit crap but um I'm fine with my name being put on things because I, I think different people will approach it different ways but for me, I'm okay with that because for me it makes it more real, there's somebody's name attached to it because it can be a wee bit hypothetical you know or if this happens, this is what you could do and if somebody I know sees my name, I don't mind that because if you know somebody it's happened to and you know what they did and how they got out of it then it makes it easier I think for you to imagine yourself doing something similar rather than just some mythical person you might have never heard of has done this and how do you know it's not just a story anyway? But it really brings it right home literally if somebody you know or somebody you see all the time that is what they did. And I think it just speaks volumes even realising that about people. So although I'm happy, I'll put that on the form I'm happy to have my name attached to things so that's one side of it because I think it makes it more real but on the other hand it's not about me, me, me, me, me, me, it's, it's just about this whole situation and basically it's, it's ordinary. It happens and here's some of the things that you can do and it's dead scary but one of the scariest bits is not knowing what you're going to do about it and I think once you make up your mind to leave, whether you've left or not, once you've made up your mind to do that it's a wee seed you planted in yourself or a wee light that kind of glows and keeps you going through horrible times and you can just sit there while they're screaming at you being sort of smug inside going la la la can't hear you, you know. It gets you through some things. So it's kind of normal and ordinary but it's a bit crap as well.

*And not really talked about which is why it's so important that...*

Yeah, yeah. And actually just the last thing I don't know if it's relevant for the thing or sort of appropriate in terms of your sphere of what you talk about but all the crap happening with just worldwide now Donald Trump and everything else and all the abuse you know and all this misogyny coming out and everything else, I just think now that whatever issues going on or whatever you observe we've got to talk about it and stand up against it and be seen to, but not in a you must do this and you must do, I just mean that where you're able to, even if it's just not laughing at some sexist jokes that somebody makes, whatever you can do to just counter this in any way you can or

you can think of you've got capacity to do, we've got to, we've got to gather the people to say we're not having this, this is not on. So.

*Great, thank you very much.*

**End interview**