

Oral History Interview Transcript

Interviewee: Lily Greenan

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Location: Scottish Women's Aid office, Edinburgh

Time: 01:27:16

Interviewer: Flora Pringle-Paterson

Time period: 1980s, 2000s

Groups: Scottish Women's Aid

Roles: Fundraising development worker (SWA), former CEO (SWA)

Okay, so this is Lily Greenan's interview. First question: Can you describe what your connection to Women's Aid was, and why did you get involved in Women's Aid?

I knew Women's Aid locally, I worked in Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre from 1981. I was a volunteer in the days when we were all volunteers, um, and I was involved with Women's Aid in Edinburgh quite quickly as partners, or as co-activists in the run up to the 1985 World Conference on Women. There was an organisation, or a group that came together called the Scottish Joint Action Group, convened by the Scottish Convention of Women. And, um, Rape Crisis and Women's Aid were both members of that group and what we were doing was trying to develop a Scottish Women's response or submission to the World Conference to go via the Women's National Commission in London. There's a whole other story about the politics of the Women's National Commission that I won't bore you with just now. Suffice it to say, Scotland was not well represented at the 1975 World Conference for Women, so for the 1985 one it was agreed that we would try and do our own thing, and I was the Rape Crisis rep for part of that time. So, I worked with **[name of person anonymised]**, who at the time was with Edinburgh Women's Aid. And, so we did a bit of joint work there. I knew **[name of person anonymised]**, um, who was also with Edinburgh Women's Aid so I had overlap, and did, through Rape Crisis, you know like we would exchange information, we did joint talks to the Lothian and Borders police. So my work, back then was parallel to but not within Women's Aid.

Um, I actually applied for a job at Scottish Women's Aid National Office in 1982. I had just graduated and there was a job for an administrator. The administrator at that time was **[name of person anonymised]** who I think was their first administrator and she was retiring. And they advertised for a

replacement and I applied and I got an interview which I'm blown away by because I had an English degree and virtually no admin experience. And they were lovely and I remember going to be interviewed at St Colme Street where the office was at that time. So up a lot of rickety stairs to the attic, and I was interviewed by 5 or 6 women in a slightly, in an informal kind of everyone sitting around the office setting, and some of the women were survivors of domestic abuse who were in refuge, and some were workers in local groups and one of them was probably from the staffing group, now that I think about it, and one of them was **[name of person anonymised]**, who was the then co-ordinator. And they were lovely, I mean I was clueless and I had absolutely no hope. I was 22 and knew nothing and, but, I came in, I applied for it because I had just discovered the Women's Movement the previous summer. I had got involved with Rape Crisis, it was the summer of me reading *The Women's Room*. This book changes lives it said on the cover, and it did. It changed mine completely. I bought it at a railway station, never looked back. And, at Women's Aid interestingly one of the things I talked about was my own experience of abuse by a partner at a time when domestic abuse, or you know like, battered wives, battered women. We were calling it domestic violence, I think, by then. It was still very much seen as, you know husband and wife, kids, you know like people who'd been married for a while. Nobody talked about abuse by boyfriends, and I'd been abused by a boyfriend, a guy I was involved with for a very brief period of time in my first year at university. And I talked about that, and it was the first, and I said it's not the same thing, but my boyfriend was, wasn't very good to me and he was abusive and put me down and you know like. And they really responded to, like they were kind about that and I remember coming away from it thinking that some of those women knew exactly what I was talking about, and being kind of impressed. I was new to interviews full stop so it was a very unlikely early interview for a job. But it really stuck with me that as an organisation they'd made the effort to bring people in who had personal experience of the issue.

00:04:39 And then in 1989, so I went on doing, sort of, collaborative work. I was involved in the planning group, um, for the 1987 Scottish Women's Liberation Conference which was called Working to End Violence Against Women, and I was the Rape Crisis rep. All the meetings were in Glasgow because most of the people involved were from the West but that was working quite closely with women who were in the Glasgow Women's [Aid] collective and others around the place. Um, and the meetings were usually held at the Glasgow Women's Aid offices so I felt like I got to know a lot of people around the Women's Aid network and didn't realise 'til later that that wasn't that common

for Rape Crisis workers, you know that there wasn't the same overlap or, or, that not everyone had the same experience of working closely with Women's Aid. And some did because they were in the same office, you know like, in one area, um, down in Ayrshire, I can't remember I think it was Kyle and Carrick Women's Aid set up the Rape Crisis centre because they needed a service for women who'd been raped and they got money through the Urban Aid funding programme. Um, so sometimes there was connection but a lot of the time there wasn't, and then, um, so I knew folk and I was heavily involved in Rape Crisis and in the then quite informally organised Rape Crisis network. Um, still no paid workers certainly in Edinburgh, I think Glasgow was the only place that had a paid worker in those days in Rape Crisis. And I left Rape Crisis for a period of time at the end of 1988. Needed a break, and was doing other things. I was working with the Refugee Council at the time. And, and I bumped into someone who was a friend who worked for Scottish Women's Aid and she said, oh we've got this job that we've not been able to fill, um, for a fundraising development worker. And I went, oh right, sounds interesting. And, she sent me the stuff and I applied for it. They'd advertised it, and I think they'd advertised it and offered it to someone who didn't take it and, they were, it was only a 6-month contract. I think the collective weren't sure what they should do next so it was a bit of a fluke really. I applied for it and I got the job.

So I went back to St. Colme Street to work for 6 months developing their first fundraising strategy which was a hoot. Um, I was being interviewed this morning by **[name of person anonymised]** from the Daily Record who's doing a piece, to, to coincide with the seminar next week. And she said, what was it like raising money for Women's Aid in those days and I said it was a joke. You know like, actually, I went and talked to lots of people who were doing fundraising work in other voluntary organisations. I remember speaking to the guy who ran the fundraising side of, um, what is now Children First, it was called something else then. And, he said yeah and we get only 3% of our money comes from central government and we get X amount from legacies and X amount from, and most of their money came from legacies, trusts and the public giving them money in cans. They still had, they were the cruelty, the RSSPCC, the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. And they had these little, you know, kind of vulnerable looking children statues on top of a collection box that sat in shops and things like that. And they got loads of money from them because people went ah it's for the kiddies. And, and you know I visited other people who were, sort of, who raised money in different ways and I went back to the office and sat down feeling really depressed 'cos I knew there was no hope of raising money using those sources at that time, for, um, domestic

violence work. There just wasn't, there wasn't the public sympathy for it. It was still quite antagonistic in terms of how people in public sector agencies viewed the work that Women's Aid did. I think in 1989 police response was still pretty diabolical. They didn't have a lot of sympathy for the woman that they were, there were going out repeatedly to the same households. And, it was just, it was a nuisance to them. Um, and there was a widespread it's their own fault, why doesn't she just leave, you know like she must be doing something to provoke him. And those myths are still around but they were the norm in those days, there was no, there was no alternative voice other than Women's Aid. And it just seemed like there was no way we were going to be able to stand on Princes Street with cans and collect money for domestic abuse. Um, so I wrote a fundraising strategy and presented it before I finished my 6-month contract and I don't know if they did anything with it to be honest.

00:09:39 We were collectively organised in those days. I joined a collective that had at the time I think there were, publicity, legal issues, there were 3 people in what was called the general office. So there was a publicity worker who was **[name of person anonymised]**. Um, legal issues, that was **[name of person anonymised]**, and **[name of person anonymised]** was the administrator. And, training had 2 workers, **[name of person anonymised]** and **[name of person anonymised]**. **[name of person anonymised]** might not be her second name, I knew someone else called **[name of person anonymised]**. Um, and then up in Dundee was where the children's office was, um, and that was about when they got big enough to have a separate children's office. There had been a huge, kind of, Scottish Women's Aid executive discussion. The executive was all of the groups, and there were like 40 groups, or 41 groups at that time and they could all send 3 voting representatives to the quarterly executive meetings. And they were your boss if you were a national worker. I went to 2 executives. I have to say it was the worst employment experience of my life because you were answerable to everybody in that room equally. And, and they could poke holes in your report, they could tear it apart, they could ask you why you did this rather than do that. It was an absolutely dreadful employment practice and they did change it later, while they were still operating as a collective. But the good thing about it was, if something passed at the executive, then you kind of knew that it had the body of the network behind it. You knew that there was support for it, so. Um, executives, quarterly. Oh, they had made a decision that they wanted to decentralise. That it wasn't right to have everything located in Edinburgh. And so, they plumped for putting the children's office in Dundee, which was fine except we had monthly collective meetings and we did 2 of them in

Edinburgh and 1 of them in Dundee, was how it worked. So on a monthly basis there would be this massive travel expenses bill as workers shuttled back and forward between these 2 cities to have the monthly collective meeting, which was an all-day meeting and, which used a stopwatch to get through the agenda. The one that I really, I remember it really clearly there were 97 separate items on the agenda for the monthly collective, national collective meeting. And I had, I'd worked in collectives by then for 8 years but I had never experienced anything that was quite as complex.

00:12:20 And it was the beginning of my understanding that when you're working, when I worked in Rape Crisis the policy areas and campaigning areas that we were engaged with were primarily focused around the justice system. Getting rape taken seriously in the courts, and to some extent healthcare. Um, and by 1989 I would say mental health services in particular, because we were supporting a huge number more child sexual abuse survivors, many of whom had carried their, their struggle with them internally for so long that, that it became impossible and they would end up needing mental health care because they were struggling too much. So we were focused in those directions, and that was it pretty much. But Women's Aid worked across housing, social work, education, health, the justice system both criminal and civil. And the police. You know it interacted with all of these different public sector agencies, as well as the prevention elements of the work and the public awareness elements of the work. So it was, it was and is a massive set of portfolios in terms of the different avenues you're trying to target at any one time. And that hence the huge agendas for national workers because there were discussions about what were we doing on such and such. There's a new housing bill, the legal issues worker would want to discuss that with the collective to get a steer on what we think the line should be and then she would write a paper that would go out to the executive and then the executive would direct the line because the national collective was directed by the executive. They were our employer and they did tell us what to do. So it was quite an interesting dynamic. And, 6 months I think for me at that time was enough. I'm filled with admiration for the women who were able to work in that way for longer, and made it work, you know like. It wasn't as dysfunctional as sometimes that there's a belief about, I think, an enormous amount of really significant important work was done during those years. Great progress was made. The Matrimonial Homes Act, which was a huge milestone in terms of legislative change. It gave women the right to stay in their home even where their partner was the tenant, the named tenant of the home. They could stay in their home with their children and their partner could be excluded using an interdict process. Now, it was civil, it had limits to it but the interdict had powers of arrest

attachable and that was big. That meant that if he breached the interdict he could be arrested and charged. That was massive, and, and the pressure to make that happen, and the work on it came from a collective of collectives basically. Of quite small groups of women around the country and this very tiny, at that time, between 1976 and 1981, very small national staff working together to achieve that change. The move towards, um, having a more public focus, a more politically public or publically political focus on domestic violence in the mid-90s happened at a time when this place was run by a collective. So, some really good work happened, lots of training work, the development of a really good training programme that just sent out consistent messages about what domestic violence is, um, what it does to the women and children who experience it. Um, engagement with the Developing Perpetrator programmes, the change programme in Forth Valley. Um, and the Domestic Violence Probation project in Edinburgh. You know like, they influenced, they had a role in influencing a lot of development over the period of time before the collective working approach. They went through a restructuring process in the early 2000s, and, yeah. The agreement was that they would no longer be a collective, that's the next bit of a story. You asked me about how I got involved [laughs] sorry. You need to interrupt if I'm talking for too long, just wave at me and say, or if you want to ask a question. Because I'll just keep talking.

00:16:55 *No, that was, that was very thorough. Um, would you like to talk about the transition away from being a collective, is that something that would interest you?*

Yeah, I wasn't here, so I'll say that upfront. I was in, by then, I was working in Lanarkshire. I'd been in Rape Crisis as a full-time paid worker from 1992 to 1999, and in that time did a little bit of work with Edinburgh Women's Aid because I chaired the local multi-agency partnership on Violence Against Women in Edinburgh. And, and being blunt, my main problem at the time was getting Women's Aid to come to the meetings because they were busy. You know like, their work was less containable I think in some ways. Rape Crisis had a helpline, those were the hours the helpline was open, and you booked appointments with women and we didn't have drop in, and Women's Aid did. They had an office that women could just arrive in or they could phone in to the office in the morning and need immediate help so their work load was much less predictable. So they didn't often get to the partnership meetings and I had to do some, could you come to this one because they're talking about taking the refuges away from you. You know, those kind of moments in that period of time. And then I went to this job in Lanarkshire so I was out of Edinburgh. I worked with the Women's Aid

groups in Lanarkshire in quite a different way because I was sitting within the health service. And, and, yeah, I had an interesting dynamic where, because we sat in the health service we were seen as statutory so people from public sector organisations would say things to me that they wouldn't say to the Women's Aid workers. That wee team, at the EVA project, it was an unusual, it was an unusual phenomenon at that time, to have a team of workers who sat inside a public sector organisation focused on violence against women, and, out of 6 of us, 4 of us had worked in Women's Aid or Rape Crisis and 1 had written her doctoral thesis on domestic abuse. So there was quite a history in the team and working with the local Women's Aids groups, you know, was challenging because there was so much resistance to them locally, in Lanarkshire at the time. Um, and, the relationship with Scottish Women's Aid was a little bit tense, I think. I don't really know why, I'm not entirely sure what that was about, but. Um, we, yes this is interesting because my experience of Women's Aid during the early part of my work in Lanarkshire was quite negative. And I don't know what was going on, this was in 2000, 1999, late '99. We wanted to bring in training, we had £25,000 to spend on training and my instinct was we get Scottish Women's Aid to do it and we contacted and the trainer seemed quite keen for it to happen, and then we just got a phone call, we didn't hear from them and one of the staff phoned to say what's happening, we're trying to set up this programme and was told very bluntly we've been instructed not to engage with you. And it was because one of the local Women's Aid groups had a problem with us being there, and had raised it at an executive [laughs]. And, people had kind of got, you know there had been a bit of a reaction to, what is this new health project that thinks they can do everything on domestic abuse. And, I just, I mean I remember I phoned and said I think you're being really stupid, you've just lost a £25,000 contract, I don't know a voluntary organisation in the country that would walk away from that. And, um, it felt odd, you know, I felt, I think I felt quite betrayed by it. I felt like, you know, I'd been part of the women's movement for so long and the women I spoke to when I phoned was someone I knew and I said you know me, do you really think I would come and work on a project that was going to shut down 3 Women's Aids groups, get out of here, you know like, what is this really about. It was, it felt awful, it was really quite bad.

00:21:15 But, I wasn't here when they went through the restructuring process, obviously I came in after that. My understanding is that it was driven in part by the Scottish exec and probably in part by the workers who were here, feeling like it wasn't really working for them anymore. I don't know the full story. Um, what I do know is that there was an agreement that they would become an

independent organisation i.e. independent of the network, set up their own articles of association because they didn't have separate articles at that point. Um, and appoint a national coordinator, which they did. Um, and I think that happened by about 2003. Um, and I think she was here for about 18 months. I actually don't know exactly how long she was here. And then there was a gap, and then they recruited, they went out, they brought in a change management team again and they did some more work and, um, and they ran a recruitment and I got the job. And that was, I started in April 2006. Um, and, it was interesting coming back. Um, I would say I wanted to come back, I partly wanted to come back because, when I spoke to 2 or 3 people in my peer group, you know so feminists of some years standing, about thinking that I might apply for the job and they thought I was nuts. They, I mean they seriously said, one of them, who is no longer with us sadly, grabbed my arm in Argyle Street and said Lily Greenan, you must be fucking joking. And she burst out laughing, like hysterical laughter. And I looked at her, and that was the turning point, I looked at her and said, you know what this is really not funny, actually. That an organisation that is the biggest feminist organisation in Scotland provokes that, and it wasn't about any individual worker. People really respected, you know, people who were working with national workers from here at the time, I knew, had a great deal of respect for them as individuals.

00:23:29 There was something about the organisation, had become very inward looking and, and nobody really knew what was going on here. You know like, if you were out there, when I worked in Lanarkshire I had no idea what was happening at Scottish Women's Aid. Now, there might not be any reason for me to know because I was managing a project in the health service but I was connected to local Women's Aid groups, to Rape Crisis and they didn't know [laughs]. And they'd been through a huge internal process and a big period of change and it had been quite difficult and I just thought, oh feck it, I'll just go for it. I felt like, it was important to step up and I might not be the right person, I applied for the job knowing that, but I thought I'd give it a go, and I got the job. Um, and so I came in to a team of I think about 15. There were some gaps, there were some vacancies, there was someone who'd been off on long-term sick. And, um, and other, you know so the work that she'd been doing just wasn't being covered. Um, and there was a need for change and a bit of reconfiguration and really thinking about what the organisation's purpose was. And, so that's what I came in to do really, to look at what do we do now. What needs to change, what, where is this organisation at, what is it achieving, what do we need to do differently. Um, so that's yeah, that was my starting point. I would say hitting the ground running doesn't begin to describe it. Um, there

were a lot of things going on in the network at the time. The groups had been under huge pressure because of the Regulation of Care Act which came in in 2001 and it led directly to Women's Aid groups having to register with what was then called the Care Commission, now the Care Inspectorate as housing support providers, as providers of housing support and, in some cases, early years services or childcare services. And they didn't really fit the model. You know, like, when I started in 2006 I think there were still 41 groups, 2/3 of them were collectives, including Glasgow which had 36 staff and North Ayrshire which had 40. They were collectives, they were huge collectives. But 2/3 of the groups were still collectives so just at a very practical level of who is the named manager, which is one of the questions when you register a service. There had to be negotiations about how that would be dealt with. And the Care Commission basically said we don't care if you're a collective, you still, you know like you could do that if you like but you still need to have somebody who's named as the named manager. So there were some practical sort of things that were difficult, and then on the back of registration came a requirement for staff to be suitably qualified and registered. So the services were registered and then there was going to be this period of time in which the individual workers had to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council, and in order to register they had to be appropriately qualified, and the list of qualifications for a Women's Aid refuge worker included physiotherapy [laughs]. You could have a degree in physiotherapy, I mean there was a range of SVQ that were options. And it was just that you know like, it was a generic process for all care services, it didn't distinguish or make any distinction around the particular work that Women's Aid groups did which was quite different from straight forward housing. I mean, yeah they were supporting people who were in accommodation, but as part of that they were doing advocacy, they were doing police accompaniment, they were going to court with women, they were negotiating on their benefits, you know they were doing a range. Plus, they were providing space for people to recover from huge traumas in their lives. And that wasn't really recognised in the system. So there was a lot going on in the groups. And a number of groups went through big change processes, some of which were triggered by quite big events, you know, there were crises, there were a number of groups that hit crisis. And 2 really huge things that happened in the first 3 months that I was here and I won't discuss them because they're about individual groups, resolved now. But, I was supposed to have a 3-month induction and I didn't really get a 3-month induction. I just ran from one thing to another. It was a bit mad. But I did meet all the staff and I did talk to them about their roles, and I did recognise where some of the changes needed to happen. And, and yeah it began to feel like okay, we can do some stuff here. And we were in, 2006, we were

in the 30th anniversary year, and because of, you know like, whatever had been going on, there was an oral history project running but there was no particular programme of events or. So one of the things I did was say I think we need to do a big, quite a high profile conference, and we ran a conference that brought the Dobashes in and Evan Stark, we flew him over from the States. And we used it as a way to say here's what's changed, so we got the Dobashes to talk about 'Violence Against Wives', the original study from 1974. And, and we had, and they also talked about the work they were doing currently, and it was a reflective space. You know, it was about where has this all come from and Evan talked about coercive control. It was the arrival of coercive control books in this country. And it was a really, um, strong statement from the organisation that a lot had been achieved, and that Scottish Women's Aid had played a significant role in all of that. We had a government minister speak at it which I think might have been a first for them. And it set the pattern for the conference so.

00:30:23 *Um, so you talked a little bit about the interactions with external organisations and groups. Um, did you have any connection or can you describe any interaction with the police or other social workers maybe?*

In the period from 2006 you mean. I didn't previously, prior to that because, I mean my role in 1989 was you know, quite, tightly defined. Um, coming back. Coming back was interesting because it was clear I mean there was a significant amount of work going on, um with different services. The police, by then I think the ACPOS working group was happening and Scottish Women's Aid was represented on that. I was struck again by the breadth of the portfolios, you know like across the staff team here. There were people working on policing, on prosecution on you know legislative development. There were people working on immigration and 'no recourse' issues, um as it developed. There were people working on children's policy, education, sort of social work, you know, children and families sort of approaches to domestic abuse looking at social work training. There were people focused on housing and homelessness, looking at how to improve the, um, response of housing and homelessness units to domestic violence. Um, you know like it covered a massive area and, you know like, there was a kind of more practice focused element as well in terms of the training work in terms of the training work that was being delivered that at that time by **[name of person anonymised]**, and **[name of person anonymised]** was still around at that time and she was focused on training and responding to children and young people. And, you know, we were beginning to look at accreditation, you know like how to get the training worker accredited so that people, um,

Women's Aid workers. And this was linked to the regulation of care stuff so that workers had a route to validate what was, effectively, years of apprenticeship and experience. Most of the Women's Aid workers at that time in local groups didn't have formal qualifications in the work they were doing. Um. And many of them had worked for Women's Aid for years, and we're talking decades, you know a long time. And the age demographic, when we did a study in 2007, the age demographic was a bit scary because a significant proportion, like over 50%, over half of the staff around the local groups were in their late 40s or into their 50s. Which you know like sets up an, if they weren't going to move on, potentially there was going to be quite a big succession issue at the point where they all retired [laughs]. And the children's workers tended to be younger, which was also interesting.

00:33:37 Um, so there was a lot of work going on and a lot of engagement with public sector agencies as a result of that but this was a campaigning and a policy organisation. So, um, the engagement was at a senior strategic level rather than operational. And what a senior strategic manager says from the police or social work or health or anywhere else is really different from what might be happening on the ground. And, um, so the strength of this organisation has largely been about having that higher, like quite sort of national strategic focus but being informed by the experiences of its members who are engaging operationally with the police, the social work departments, the housing. They know what's happening on the ground, they know where the failings are, they know like the policy might say this is how you're supposed to respond to domestic abuse and that's not what the women who are coming to us are experiencing. The organisation was always able to use that feedback loop from groups to be able to counter complacency at a strategic level which I think is quite a valuable route. It's a valuable part of the relationship between Scottish Women's Aid and its membership. So, yeah my own engagement initially not so much because I was very focused on organisational change and restructuring, we went through a restructuring process to introduce a group of senior practitioners and we then went through a job evaluation process. So there was a lot of internal stuff, and my external focus, you know was around the national group to address violence against women largely. We had **[name anonymised]** working on what evolved in to the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People. Um, **[name anonymised]** was still with us at that time and she was doing quite a lot of work along with **[another woman]** **[section deleted at request of the interviewee]**. It'll come back to me, I lost a lot of names in the last year and a half. They were doing work around children's services and, you know, the evaluation model for the children's workers in Women's Aid groups that were funded by the Scottish Executive.

There was a lot of work that was about supporting the delivery of Scottish, of the national strategy to address domestic abuse, the delivery of Scottish executive initiatives. The National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan was in development through 2006, 2007. And, hadn't launched before the 2007 election, so the SNP get the credit for implementing it but they didn't start it, they didn't start the process, the process started under the previous administration. And, um, and it was 2 years of really hard work and, to produce a 3-year strategy to improve responses to children and young people. And I think that was a significant piece of work for Scottish Women's Aid, who were, you know like drivers of quite a lot of it.

Um, there was a lot happening around the homelessness agenda, and **[name of people anonymised]** were working on that. The 2012 target of ending homelessness in Scotland, which I think was always an interesting aspiration. But it led to quite a lot of work developing, you know like the strategic responses. And there was a lot of work as well for them around developing practice guides. They did some good guidance work for housing associations as well as housing officers. Um, and then looking at, you know, how do you ensure that the views of service users are informing the development of services and policy. And that ultimately led to the WHIR project in Fife, which was a participatory action research project that involved women who'd experienced domestic abuse in developing the research framework, and delivering, like implementing it, so being community researchers. Um, and we shifted on the training agenda as well. We moved in to more of a consultancy role for a while, um, to inform the development of the NHS gender based violence, sort of training work. Um, and again that was, you know a high level strategic goal for the NHS. The chief executives around the country for health boards had a requirement placed on them by NHS Scotland to develop gender based violence action plans that included training key staff. So we supported that, more or less seconded **[name of person anonymised]** a day a week for a year, um, to support the development of that work and to start the delivery of it.

00:38:49 And, so I would say a lot of our work was, it was reactive in the sense that we were responding to the things that we were involved in developing but the initiatives were coming mostly from central government. And we were looking at what could our role be in ensuring the best possible implementation of those, or developing things which helped to improve responses. And less perhaps in that period of time on what is it we want, what is it we want to do. And I think that's the difficulty when you're in a dynamic policy field, is that there's so many actors, there's so many

players involved that taking a stand, and saying what is it we want to get out of all of this. And then really going for it can be quite challenging, quite difficult, because in order to do it you have to let go of other stuff and it's very difficult for all of us in the field I think, it was very difficult to just let go of the other stuff and be able to focus on actually what we're gonna do this year is achieve that, that and that. So our strategy discussions could be a bit fraught, I'll just leave it at that I think.

Um. So you talked a little bit about the involvement of the government, what about the changes in Scottish politics in recent years? Has this had any impact on the work of Women's Aid or how domestic abuse is talked about, for you?

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament, I would say, you know like going back that far, was undoubtedly a trigger for a massive focus on domestic abuse in particular, and later broader, or all forms of violence against women. But initially it was domestic abuse that got the attention, and there's lots of reasons for that. Some of it was that Scottish Women's Aid was the biggest organisation and they already had a relationship with civil servants. Some of it was that that first Parliament in 1999 had in it women who'd been Women's Aid workers, and or had been community workers or social workers, so like they knew the issues, they knew the agenda. The first debate on domestic abuse in the Scottish Parliament was opened by Maureen Macmillan who was a founding member of Ross-shire Women's Aid, um, and then a MSP for the Highlands and Islands. And, so some of it was that, and some it was it was a new Parliament, it had a significant budget, it didn't have the hard policy stuff as in it didn't have tax, benefits, migration, immigration, um, welfare stuff. It didn't have defence, you know it didn't have any of those things. What it had, like in terms of devolved issues, were all the service delivery areas: social work, health, education, police, law, which wasn't a devolved issue, it had never been part of the Westminster framework and our legal system had always been separate. And, so, so actually there was a new Parliament and people were, like looking for things they could do. And that's a very simplistic way to put it but I think part of the reason why domestic abuse became one of the big issues was because it, everybody could agree on it, there wasn't a party in that first Parliament that wouldn't stand up and say domestic abuse is bad and we have to do something to stop it. So it got cross-party supports. Domestic abuse rather than all forms of violence against women because partly, as I say, Scottish Women's Aid was the biggest voice. And partly that, as I've said, domestic abuse is the issue of all of the forms of violence against women, it's the one that statutory organisations have to respond to across the board. There are homelessness implications, or you know like, there's implications for housing, policy, education,

social work, health. And adult women who experience other forms of violence against women, sexual violence for example, there's no statutory obligation to them, there's no statutory requirement to act. Except for the police have, you know like, a duty to respond when someone reports a sexual assault.

00:43:23 So, domestic violence was already a thing that people identified with because it was the issue they had to deal with. So some of it was that, but without a doubt, it really helped that we got a Parliament. And then we got a strategy, although the work on the strategy started just before, in the year before the Parliament kicked off. It actually started in 1998, but it started in the knowledge that there was a Parliament coming. And, Labour and the Lib Dems in the coalition in the first, you know in the '99 to 2003 Parliament, you know heavily supportive of the work. Similarly, in the next one, 2003 to 2007. When the SNP won with a minority vote, you know a small, you know like 1 seat to the majority in 2007, we really weren't sure how it was gonna go. And, some of that was because as a party they didn't have any particular history around having a well-developed or, um, kind of clear articulation of policy around structural inequality, of any sort. And, and there was a sense that they were a party that had a shared vision but not necessarily a set of shared values across their membership base. So we all knew some people who were in the SNP who were right of centre, and some people who were left of centre, and various people on that spectrum. So there wasn't perhaps the same sense of knowing where people were coming from. Um, and initially, after the 2007 election, there was no, we weren't getting anywhere near having a discussion with SNP politicians because they were focused on the agreement with COSLA. You know like there was a lot of political work going on and we were way down the priority list. Um, and we were able to do a couple of bits, there was a women's coalition that met, you know like, which was a functional coming together of the women's organisations and we met with Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond I think was there. And that was interesting. And, and then it kind of moved on a bit from there.

And the thing I would say, the thing what happened as well before then, the National Strategy of Domestic Abuse technically expired in 2003 but there never a review of it. There was a bit of pressure on to have a broader Violence Against Women strategy and while I was still at EVA I was commissioned to write a literature review for the National Group. I wasn't on the National Group at the time but I was commissioned to write a literature review for the National Group on Violence against Women. **[Section removed at request of the interviewee]**. But, um it identified that one of

the issues they needed to deal with was where the work was sitting. Because domestic abuse sat within justice, and it was attached to a civil servant whose remit was civil legal aid if I remember rightly. Um, and so one of my recommendations was move it to equalities. It is an equalities issue, and when you come to looking at how you prevent violence against women the service responses are specific to the particular form of gender based violence that you're talking about, mostly. You know like, people who experience domestic abuse need a different set of service responses from people who experience rape or sexual assault. So that needs to be acknowledged, and you do that, but when you're talking about prevention, if you want to prevent violence against women you have to tackle the structural inequality that underpins it and in order to that you have to locate the work in your equalities unit. And so, they had, you know like there was an announcement that more or less did that and it moved to the equalities unit. And at the same time they set up a group, an expert committee on violence against women to develop what they called a Strategic Framework on Violence Against Women. This was in 2005, okay. So we did it, we met, there were people from senior civil service roles and there was a group of us who came from the Violence Against Women sector. And we produced a draft and it went in and nothing happened. There was silence. There was continued silence. And I think it went in in early 2007 and it didn't, nothing happened with it. And then there was an election, and I think nothing happened because they were holding it back because there was gonna be an election.

00:49:05 I also wonder, part of the issue was that we'd created a strategic framework which included prostitution and pornography as harms to women, and as sort of part of the continuum, and as things that needed to be addressed if you were going to deal with the structural inequality. And the liberals, the liberal democrats in the coalition, I think would not have supported that. And I think, we've never, I have never known for sure but I suspect that there was internal disagreement about supporting a strategic framework that included pornography and prostitution as part of the problem. So we don't know for sure. So then we have an election, you've got a new government that has a minority administration and they're trying to keep everybody happy, okay [laughs]. Like everybody. And they talk to everybody. And they do nothing on the strategic framework. They do nothing, and they do nothing, and they do nothing and then in 2009 they published, they did a very cursory here's a draft of something. Wasn't a very well consulted on document and they produced something called Safe [*sic*] [*recte* Safer] Lives Changed Lives. Which was a shared approach to tackling violence against women. It committed nobody to anything, it required nobody to be

accountable for anything. It didn't place any real responsibility on local authorities or public agencies to do it, it said violence against women is bad and we should do something about it and it would be a good idea if we all did something about it [laughs]. And here are some things that we could maybe do, and it used some practice examples from around the country. And it was very weak, there isn't any getting away from it. It was really, it was neither a strategy nor an action plan nor anything else. It was a statement, an aspirational statement really, was about as good as you could call it, I think. And it was difficult, and I think it was challenging at the time because it was what we got, and I was here by then, and we were really quite despairing of what, it, because it gave us nothing with which to lobby. You know like, we couldn't say there's a strategy and it says you're to do this. And that just wasn't happening. And some of it was because for the new Scottish government, negotiating a new relationship with local authorities, council tax freeze in exchange for access to what was called the, um, ring-fenced funding. They rolled up the ring-fenced funding, 8 million of which was for Women's Aid services. So that we had legitimate concerns about the removal of ring-fencing. So we were lobbying on that at the same time as trying to engage around the Safe [sic] [recte Safer] Lives thing.

I mean, it was a difficult period of time I think. Um, because they were very clearly not going to direct local authorities to do anything. They were pro-devolution, obviously. You know they were for decentralising power, they wanted to be separate from Westminster. And so logically they couldn't impose control, I think that the way it was seen was that they couldn't impose control on local authorities. I'm not, I'm not convinced that that was a helpful way to do it but it's what they did. So we ended up with Safe [sic] [recte Safer] Lives Changed Lives in 2009. And, and we probably spent the next 2 or 3 years, I think, couple of years anyway, developing a more outcomes focused approach which was the Violence Against Women Outcomes Framework. As Scottish Women's Aid we did it internally and, um, then involved, and brought in people that were in multi-agency partnerships and brought in partners from the wider Violence Against Women sector. And then went and presented it at the National Group, at which Nicola Sturgeon was the Chair, before she was the First Minister, because she had the Equalities Portfolio, she was the Cabinet Secretary for Equalities. And she basically said at that meeting, Scottish Government's gonna adopt this. And we thought, ooh. And, and it needed to go in to the government because we were at the place where we were developing. The next stage was to develop indicators and measures, and it needed a wider buy-in. Um, but it went in there and nothing happened, and nothing happened, and nothing

happened. And there was talk of we're gonna do more of a whole system thing, we're gonna ... And it got a bit tense, I would say. Um, and then, um. The development of Equally Safe which initially was, I think, I don't think it was handled well, the start-up of it. It always felt a little bit stop-start and it was never entirely clear why. Um, and, and then there was a sudden rush to finish the piece of work at the end, and yeah. There's some stuff around there that was quite difficult to deal with. We did a lot of backroom stuff. And I think, I think the interventions that we made were helpful. If not entirely welcomed. Um, I think what's there now is a stronger piece of work, partly because of the interventions we made, and others. It wasn't just us. There was concern about it from other folk and so they've ended up with something that is stronger because now there is a performance framework in development and there are work-streams focused on different aspects of the strategy. And it feels like there's, there's the potential for it to deliver something. It feels like there's the potential for it deliver something, but I won't really believe it until they present everything, next International Women's Day, or whenever they are now going to do it. **[Section deleted at request of the interviewee].**

00:55:37 *Ok, just to go back a little bit, you mentioned earlier a book that really inspired you to become involved in the Women's Liberation Movement. Were there any other, did anything else inspire you to get involved in this? Ideas from friends, stories in the news about domestic violence.*

My first involvement was with Rape Crisis, and the summer of 1981. I was at Stirling University and in the period of time before the summer vacation there had been a series of incidents that had been quite disturbing. A friend was followed from an old, you know, she'd been at the campus radio station and she was followed down the road. And nothing happened but she was a bit threatened. Another friend went down to the local village to phone her partner who was in the states, and you couldn't phone international calls from the payphones so she went out to Bridge of Allan. And she got trapped in the phone box by a guy who just came and stood outside the phone box against the door with his hands, you know like, just staring at her whilst she's speaking to her partner who's in the Southern United States and therefore useless. And he was yelling at her get off the phone and phone the cops [laughs]. And the guy eventually went away, so there was that. A couple of friends were pursued by a gang of lads on campus, chased in to a toilet, and, one of them, Disappeared under a pile of bodies. And god knows what would've happened except that another guy that we knew appeared with a whirling martial arts chain, **[section deleted at request of the interviewee].** So there had been these things that had happened to women that I was friendly with, you know like

more to do with people I knew than to do with myself. My own experience in my first year was well buried by then, I wasn't telling anyone about that at that stage. Um, and then it was the summer vacation. It was 1981 and I think it was the year I had some temp work with an agency on George Street and they sent me to a job that was just about moving legal files from one office building to another. There was nothing complicated about this job, it was manual lifting, it was manual handling. You moved the files in to big black sacks and you carried them. And I found out they were paying me 5 pence an hour less than the two guys I was working with. And I challenged them on it, I said you can't do that it's against the law, we have an Equal Pay Act now. And they said yeah but they carry more than you and I said no they don't. They carry more at one time but I'm doing twice as much work as they're doing because they're just strolling back and forward. But I do as much as them, I just do it faster [laughs]. And, and they didn't get me any more work. So I went, oh, uh.

00:58:26 I was beginning to wake up a little bit I think, to a not very nice world for young women. I was 22 at the time, and I was going on the train somewhere and I saw this book and it was on the stand. And it said, it was called, it was *The Women's Room* by Marilyn French and it said this book changes lives on the cover. And I thought, oh I'll have that. And I read it and it blew my mind, and it wasn't about my generation it was about my mother's generation but I recognised her and her friends to some extent and I did recognise the feelings of powerlessness and frustration and rage that went on for them. And it just, something about it really pushed a button for me. And, and then I had a friend who was living in a flat in **[location anonymised]** and one of her flatmates was the big sister of a pal of ours at university. And she said to me, oh, you know. And, the big sister was a volunteer at Rape Crisis. And my friend **[name of person anonymised]** said I'm gonna go to an open meeting at Rape Crisis on Thursday night, do you fancy coming? And I went yeah alright, if it's raining. And I think it was raining, and so I went. And I felt like I'd come home, it was unbelievable.

It was an open meeting. Rape Crisis at the time had a tiny office in the back of the Women's Centre which was in Broughton Street, in a basement. And it was full of burst sofas and tatty old cushions and scrubby looking carpets. And the woman who was, um, hostessing the open meeting for people, for woman who were interested was an American woman. And she just talked about women, what it was like being female. You know, it was consciousness raising, basically. And we talked to each other about the things that we struggled with, about being women in the world. And I started the following week, on the helpline. And it was all a bit mad, 'cos you just, you went and sat with

someone who was already doing it. And the woman that I went to meet was great, but she went to the toilet at one point, and while she was in the toilet [laughs] the phone rang, and she just went oh can you just answer that! And I thought I don't know what to say, but I answered it 'cos I'd been told to. And I took a call from a woman who'd been followed down the road by a guy who was making crude comments behind her. He hadn't touched, hadn't done anything except follow her down the road and make crude comments. And she was really scared, and I knew what that felt like. I'd been through that. So I listened, and I said it's horrible when that happens. And, um. And kinda, yeah. It was, it was really powerful to have that kind of exchange [with someone I didn't know, you know like. She just said thanks for listening, and she hung up. And I don't think she ever phoned back, she just needed someone to know she was scared.

01:01:33 Um, so. I got involved for the month that was left, it was the 6th of August 1981, the night I went to my first open meeting. 35 years ago this year. And then, I had to back to university for a term, I had a semester left to do, I was doing education. And, I joined the Women's Collective which was a feminist group. And that was more of a discussion space than anything else, but it gave me exposure to the thinking and the ideas, and I started to read. And I had to finish my dissertation and finish my education course, um, and stuff, so I didn't have a lot of time. And I started to read, I'd done an English degree and in 4 years of an Honours English degree I realised that I had read 4 or 5. 5 books by women. In an entire Honours programme. George Eliot, Jane Austen, um, Mariah. Rack- what was her name? The woman who wrote Castle Rackrent, Anglo-Irish writer. And Iris Murdoch. Virginia Wolfe. But only a short story. That was it, in 4 years on an Honours degree. So I left university and I graduated in February 1982, and everything I read for the next 4 years was by women, to make up for it. I joined the Women's Press Book club, and I just, I read voraciously. I read everything I could get my hands on. I read 'The Female Eunuch'. I mean I just read, and it was a real, kind of mish-mash of stuff. I didn't read theory about rape. I didn't read Susan Brownmiller 'til I'd been in Rape Crisis for 4 years. And then I read 'Against Our Will'. And if I'd read it at the beginning it would've freaked me out completely, I think it was the right thing for me. So I read lots of fiction by women, and I read poetry, and I read drama. But I didn't read non-fiction, I didn't read feminist theory until I'd been around for about 4 years. I did a lot of listening and a lot of talking and exchanging ideas, and stuff. And then I read Brownmiller and, and I dipped in and out of the Dobashes 'Violence Against Wives' book but it wasn't so directly relevant to what I was doing in Rape Crisis, it felt at the time, so. It wasn't so much a feature then. 'Against Our Will' still stands out

for me as, just a phenomenal laying out of the problem. And I think she did an amazing thing with that book. I read 'The Female Eunuch' and didn't really understand why people had raved about it, I have to confess. Don't really like Germaine Greer's writing very much. Um, I later read a lot of Maya Angelou's books. I just, I read anything I could get my hands on that was about women's experiences, and loved it, it was good.

01:04:54 And, as I say Rape Crisis was my main focus. I did, um. I think I always had connections with Women's Aid. I always had links across. I started in Rape Crisis in 19, kinda summer 1981. And by summer 1982, um, we had started to look at how to, what we did about the women who were phoning who were survivors of childhood sexual abuse. This had never happened before, like people weren't upfront saying that they'd been abused in childhood until 1982. And we had a big collective meeting, we used to have Sunday meeting in Rape Crisis. It's a feature of collectives that you have these big meetings. At which, and it's about discussing big issues, so you know. There's a reason why they're called big meetings, or were. And we had a Sunday meeting that was about. We had 3 women who were in touch with us, they were phoning regularly, they'd all experienced abuse as children, and they all had multiple complex issues going on in their lives and they were really struggling. And they were all phoning very regularly. And that wasn't the usual pattern in those days. Women phoned about a sexual assault and they usually wanted to meet someone, sometimes we had women who phoned and they'd say it happened a lot time ago. But it would be about a partner, an ex-partner or, someone, you know like a stranger on a train sort of scenario. And they might only phone once. But we didn't have regular callers who were talking about sexual assault as adults. And these women stood out therefore because they phoned a lot. And it was because we were the only people they had to listen to them.

So, by 1982 we'd taken the decision that yes, rape in childhood was something we should be dealing with. And, that, um maybe what we needed to do was see what they wanted in terms of service. And what we did which was quite radical for us, or like, very different from what we'd been doing before that. We had a, we made a decision that we would ask them if they would like to meet each other. And they jumped at it. **[Section deleted at request of the interviewee]**. And these 3 women met, and talked, and they just talked about individually, and then more together, about what, what, what they wanted. What they wanted from us, what they wanted to be able to talk about. Um, and out of that came the first Incest Survivors Group. Um, and we called it incest in those days, um we

didn't call it child abuse we called it incest. Um, or incestuous rape. Because it was family members that women were talking about. Um, so yeah, that happened and I, because of the way my work went, my paid work, I ended up coming in to do that. I couldn't do the helpline 'cos I worked in Glasgow and I didn't get back to Edinburgh in time but I was asked if I would support the group, the Survivors Group. So I got involved from Rape Crisis in working with child sexual abuse survivors. Probably also worth saying that **[name anonymised]** had got involved in Rape Crisis round about the same time as me, and **[name anonymised]** was a founder member of Edinburgh Women's Aid. So she brought the domestic abuse issues in, she came to Rape Crisis as a volunteer 'cos she'd been in Women's Aid and she felt like she didn't know enough to be able to support women who were talking about rape by their husbands. So she joined Rape Crisis and then she wanted to do something for these women who'd been abused when they were children so she was one of the first facilitators for the Incest Survivors Group, and then I worked with her later. And then, you know back in to the, making the links. Never saw it as it's just one issue, it was always about ... Because I knew so many women through the services I worked with for whom there had been childhood or teenage, um, abuse and abuse by partners, and stranger assaults and, you know, like, and we lived in a culture that, that in some ways abused us all. So, I found it always a bit challenging when people were like I do domestic abuse, I don't do rape. Of course you do rape, if you do domestic abuse trust me, you're doing, you're working with people who've experienced sexual assault. So, yeah. Sorry that was a slightly sideways tangent but, yeah.

01:09:56 *Um, back to the future. The question says what do you think the future holds, what would you like to see happen next?*

Well I think we're going to get really interesting with the new legislation. The Specific Offence of Domestic Abuse is, for me, the single biggest thing that has happened in legislation terms since the Matrimonial Homes Act in 1981. Um, it's the first time that we haven an offence that names what domestic abuse is. There is no offence of domestic abuse, you know like at the moment cases are prosecuted as breach of the peace, or, um assault or serious assault or attempted murder. You know like, they're common law offences mostly. The exceptions are the recent statutory offences so things like the Section 38 threatening and abusive behaviour, um the stalking, Section 39 stalking and harassment. Which are implicitly about, but they're not actually about domestic abuse. You know, they can be used to prosecute any form of threatening and abusive behaviour where there isn't an

outside witness. So, yeah. There's some interesting change ahead of us because this new offence defines what we mean by domestic abuse, I think, in a way that we haven't had happen before in law. Um, it will put the patterns of behaviour, it makes, it just does a huge leap from incidents of violence or incidents of threats one after the other after the other sometimes. Repeated incidents but incidents nonetheless. It's a whole way of life for some women, you know like this is what happens to them day in day out. There is no incident, there is no set of incidents it's just how life is because the controlling behaviour, the threats, the coercion, the intimidation, the degradation are all part of a very systematic, um approach to degrading and, and sort of pushing down her sense of herself. And what she's capable of. Um so I think that's quite a biggie. And I think that putting it in law because of the knock-on effect that then happens will mean that potentially there's more opportunity for women to say this is what's happening to me. And a different kind of discourse around domestic abuse as a result. I'm not sure that we will see the end of domestic abuse in the next 40 years. Um, I think that the inequality that is so integral to its existence is so entrenched that it's unlikely to be 40 years.

01:13:00 I do think that we're getting somewhere with awareness. I think the challenge really is to maintain the focus, you know to keep it up there as something that, um everyone has to keep addressing and working on, not just domestic abuse but all forms of violence against women, to really get a recognition that it's not a flavour of the month issue. You know like, you can't do domestic abuse, like people run, used to run on a cycle, um. Speeding, anti-speeding campaigns. You know like the Speed Kills campaigns. Um, and they would do them for 3 months at a time. You can't do that with domestic abuse, you have to have a consistent systematic approach to preventing it in the long term. And it is multi-faceted and I think Equally Safe is on the right lines now in terms of the range of different areas of work that it identifies need to be done. But it is a, it's a generational project. You know it's generations worth of work we're talking about. And, there's something about when, when you do work in schools as an example. We do this preventative work in schools so we do healthy relationship stuff, say. And you're focussed on young people who have a sense of, but you know like what's wrong in terms of abuse in relationships. But you can do a session that raises awareness that challenges some sort of slightly wonky thinking. You can get shift within the space of that training input, or that prevention campaign that you run in a local high school. But they go back out in to an unreconstructed world. And trying to do that kind of prevention work while we still have

media bombardment that says this is what boys do and this is what girls do, and this is how boys behave and that's how girls behave - it's you know, pissing in the wind basically.

And, but I read something the other day there. It was a really good reminder. Um, it was from someone in the States who, um, has been involved politically in the past and who says now that he just, he stays close to home and he focuses on what he can do for the people he cares about, his family, his friends, his local community. What can he do that helps to make the world better for these people and he says if enough of us do that the world will change. And I thought, oh that was a good reminder. That actually, you know like, me trying to influence what happens with elections in America, waste of time. You know, all I can do is focus on what's nearest to me. And that's where I started. I got involved in the Women's Movement because the alternative at the time, I was interested in peace work and the peace movement. And I thought that tackling violence against women would be easier [laughs]. I thought that trying to demilitarise the world was gonna be too big, and that I should, I though actually. And the reason I thought it would be easier is because when I started it made a difference to that one woman that phoned to say a guy followed me down the street saying really crude stuff and now I'm in my house and I'm really frightened 'cos I think he knows where I live. It made a difference to her that somebody answered the phone and that someone, not just that someone answered the phone but that someone understood what she meant and was able to relate to it. And, and I think for years I kept myself sane by doing that. Actually, if I make a difference by just being there for someone today, I'm doing alright, I'm doing alright. It's important that I'm just, I'm doing my best, you know. I'm doing what I can, I'm doing what I can. I'm not doing my best. That's a reference to a song that's in the making. And, I still feel like that. I think that sometimes we get caught up in the really big stuff that we can't do anything about, and, and it would be nice if we could all just focus on what can I do. And it will change, it'll take a long, long, long, long time but it will change. I absolutely believe that.

01:17:36 When I started in Rape Crisis in 1981 if a woman was raped in Edinburgh at night she was taken to the city morgue to be examined 'cos that's where the pathologists worked and they were the forensic examiners. And that doesn't happen anymore. So, you know there's a very small thing at one level but we treat women who've been raped like living human beings now. We don't treat them like bodies that just have to be checked out to see whether their story stacks up against their physical symptoms. And when I started doing police talks in 1982 for Rape Crisis I used to do them jointly with Women's Aid and I eventually asked the police training people if we could do them

separately, because the Women's Aid worker would open her mouth, and the police officers in the room would jump on her. They were so antagonistic to Women's Aid, so antagonistic. Um, hated them. Like it was naked hate, it wasn't, there was nothing hidden about it. Their, their sense of disdain and contempt for what Women's Aid were trying to do was, was, you could feel it in the room. And, they were just, they were fed up of going out time, after time, after time to the same houses and it was, you know like. Well, she deserves it if she's stays there, what can she expect. Yeah he's a bastard but, you know she can get out, she could go, you know like she just needs to leave. You know like there was all that attitudinal stuff. And Women's Aid were really up against it. I started here in 2006 and when Stephen House started as the new Chief Constable at Strathclyde Police I got an email from one of his staff to say Mr. House would like to meet you. And I went through to Glasgow for a meeting that blew my mind because a Chief Constable of Police sat in a room with 5 feminists and said I've got 5 years in this job, domestic abuse is my issue, what do you want done? And I was like, I said, are you serious? [laughs] and he said, yeah I'm serious. There were lots of things I disagreed with the man about but he'd looked at the stats on one of their biggest drains on their operational time was domestic abuse. He knew he had to do something about domestic abuse because it was taking up too much worker time. Now I actually don't care what his motives were. I think that he had more commitment to it than that, I don't think it was just about reducing his stats. But that contrast between 1982 and around about 2007, unbelievable. To, to have the overview to see that is quite something. You know, I feel in some ways quite privileged 'cos I know that younger workers or workers who are involved more recently sometimes go, we're never getting anywhere and I'm thinking we are, we are, we really are. And we'll go on getting places.

01:20:46 The last thing I did before I left here [SWA] was our conference and on the platform was the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the First Minister of Scotland, who was a woman. And that, I could not have foreseen that in 1982 when I applied for a job at Scottish Women's Aid as an Administrator [laughs], no way. I think none of us could've visualised that, that in Scotland we would have the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women speak at a conference organised by a feminist organisation, and that the First Minister of Scotland would be present, as a key note speaker. Unbelievable. And then, you know, kind of announced 20 million additional pounds 2 days later for justice work on Violence Against Women. We'd never have thought it possible, yeah. It's big stuff. Yeah. So I have hope that it will change, I think that. And also, there was, I think there was a gap. I'd like to do the demographics again at some point. There was a

period of time when it felt like there were no new young feminists coming through [laughs]. And, and I'm not sure entirely what it was about, I have some theories and I not gonna, I'm gonna explore them privately and try and work out if there's any substance to it. But, in the last 5 years I've really noticed, you know the arrival, you know like a big upsurge in interest in young women in feminism. And that gives me a lot of hope, you know. Like you're interested in different stuff to some extent. But a lot of it's the same. Objectification, sort of sexualisation, you know like. And it, it's the issues I was concerned about at 22. Being seen as an object rather than a person, um. Being concerned about what clothes I wore when I was out at night. You know like, can I run in these heels? You know like all of that shit. So some of it is the same and some of it is different 'cos you've got different challenges to deal with. You've got social media for starters. But that gives me a lot of hope, that the numbers of young women who have got involved in this moment. And you know, and are, and I don't really hold much by the waves thing. I didn't know that I was a second wave feminist until somebody told me I was, and I was like, no I don't think so. And, but. Yeah, generations, new generation of women who are ready for the fight. I think that's what matters to me, 'cos I'm 57. I'm not gonna be around forever, I hopefully will be around for a very long time. But it's just good to know that there's, there's more young blood in the movement. It really makes a difference. It's great. So, I'm gonna stop there.

01:23:43 *So anything else you feel like you'd like to talk about?*

I don't think so. I think that, um. It's been hard to stay, to try and stay focused on Women's Aid because my experience in the movement has been broader than Women's Aid and, but interwoven with the Women's Aid story. And, and I have a lot of. Some of the fiercest women I know have worked in this movement, in Women's Aid as well as in Rape Crisis. **[Name anonymised]** was. You know we used to say about **[name anonymised]** that she went where angels feared to tread 'cos she would just take on anything, and she was just such a nice middle-class woman [laughs]. I'm very friendly with her son who was at university with me, and last year I was invited to speak at a fundraiser for **[name of organisation anonymised]** which was a **[location anonymised]** based organisation working on human rights issues. They do a lot of work helping NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe to develop legislation with their governments. And they're great, they're really good. I like **[name of organisation anonymised]** a lot. And **[name anonymised]** invited me to speak at their fundraiser and they flew me over, which was very nice of them. And they had a dinner the night

before the fundraiser at their chairperson's house and they said bring your friend **[name anonymised]** and his wife so they came. And it turned out to happen on, I didn't have the date firmly fixed in my head. But at some point said, **[name anonymised]** so we know that, like you and **[name anonymised]** know each other from university but is it right that you knew his Mum too. And I said yeah, **[name anonymised]** was a good friend. And it was the 10th anniversary of her death. And, so I told the story about how I met [her] and also, um, how she, um, just did crazy stuff. Um, and how women like her just went for it, you know. The notion of boundaries was a bit woolly in those days, um, and if someone needed help they got help. She went out and got them in the middle of the night, and. Um. But the funny story is the refuge at that time was in **[location anonymised]**. The first refuge for Edinburgh Women's Aid. And it happened that they ended up getting, I think they had one flat. And they got it, um a tenement building that Les McKeown family lived in. Les McKeown of Bay City Roller's fame. And, um so they went through this period of time when he was in time of screaming teenagers [laughs], out on the street. While the woman and children were up and down the stairs doing their thing. And his line apparently to **[name anonymised]** was, 'd'you no know who am er?' [laughs]. So yeah, some quite yeah. 'Cos she was trying to do the could you try and keep the noise down a bit, there's women in here trying to sleep. But yeah, crazy times, funny times. So, um, yeah. I've known some good women. Lost a lot but I've known a lot, it's good, good stuff. Right I'm gonna stop now, finish my coffee.

End interview