

Oral History Interview Transcript

Interviewee: Pamela Taylor

Date: 14/09/2016

Location: Borders

Time: 00:48:49

Interviewer: Caroline Lewis

Time period: 1970s

Groups: Edinburgh Women's Aid

Roles: volunteer, paid worker (treasurer)

The first question is can you describe what your connection to Women's Aid was, and why did you get involved with Women's Aid?

Well, my connection was I lived in the same street as Kathy Kerr, who started Women's Aid in Scotland, and we were friends, and... at that stage feminism was just hitting Edinburgh and my sister was quite a radical feminist. She told me about feminism [and] I started reading books and talking to Kathy about what happened at Women's Aid. It suddenly clicked and I became aware of things that I hadn't thought of before, like women's place in society, particularly 'battered women' as women were called in those days, which I had never really heard about because I think there's a much higher profile now than there was then. We're talking about, I think we're talking about the late seventies and so, I became involved. I started volunteering and I can't remember how long I volunteered for, but I did it probably for two or three years. And during that time I also ran a kids' group called Kids' Aid, which was for the children in the refuges and with other volunteers along with the men's group called Men Against Sexism, who drove minibuses and helped play with the kids and all that kind of thing, they also did crèches for Women's Aid events. Then I got a paid job – I was the Treasurer for Edinburgh Women's Aid and that lasted -- I can't really remember how long for. And it was a part-time job, but paid, and that was probably, that was it, yes – does that answer your question?

00:02:05 *It does, I mean it's... You talked about the feminist context, getting into feminism, your sister-in-law, and you talked about... you mentioned some books, could you develop that? Anything that you can...*

There was one book called *Housekeeping* and I think it was by someone called Ann Oakley and also I read [the] *Feminine Mystique* and I'm sure... well, I read the *Female Eunuch*. Yes, and that was part of what fed into the whole idea and just, it was a real eye opener, meeting all these women in refuges, meeting the women who ran Women's Aid. And it was Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian (I think, yes because they had a Musselburgh office), and we used to have meetings, collective meetings, so that was that really... And I did the children's thing because I had young children at the time and I was very aware of what a really difficult time the children in the refuges had. And I think they suffered in all sorts of ways and okay, it was only a Saturday morning, but at least it was something outside the refuges, which were pretty hard for the kids. Living with stressed out women and collectively and everything was different. And they'd left their friends, and their homes, and their schools, and their dads.

00:03:49 *Jumping ahead a little here, because you've raised an interesting issue, can you talk a bit about your views of Women's Aid work with children because obviously you were involved, but if you can reflect a little bit...*

I think it was quite... I think at that time it was pretty peripheral. I think Women's Aid was so stretched – we had very few resources; there was very little money. And part of my job as the treasurer was to prepare financial back-up for appeals for funding. We used to go to the Social Work department each year and they would (Edinburgh, no Lothian it was called, Social Work Department) and they would fund us. They provided most of the funding, and really the children were peripheral. The main problem was sorting out the women and getting them legal advice, getting them rehoused, if possible, or if they were going back, supporting them to go back, and really there wasn't much time or effort put into the children. Not through a lack of awareness, just because the resources in woman power, and also financial, just weren't there. We used to do fundraising for Kids' Aid: like we had a sponsored roller skate around George Watson's School in Edinburgh [laughs]. I've still got the photos, which was great, and all sorts of... We did jumble sales and things like that to raise money, but it was pretty piecemeal. And Women's Aid wasn't a popular charity: it wasn't the kind of charity where you could go along Princes Street shaking a can. It was too difficult for people and the profile was very low. Yes, so, that's all I can say about that, I think [laughs].

00:05:41 *That's really useful. Going back a little bit, can you – you had interesting roles – but can you describe a day in the life of your Women's Aid group – or what you remember?*

Okay, well, we had a very tiny office in Buccleuch Street, which was two rooms. The back room was very, very small and that was quite difficult because if women came to the office, it was quite hard to have a private conversation with someone. But that was all we could afford and it was quite, it was reasonably central so it was quite accessible. We'd have a rota of people. Some of them had paid jobs, but quite a lot of them were volunteers, as I was. And I suppose the office would open at nine o'clock in the morning and you'd listen to the answer phone messages and deal with those and then some of the workers and volunteers would be allocated refuge visits every day. So they would go out – there were three refuges in Edinburgh, all in Burdiehouse, and they would go and visit them and sort out on-the-ground kind of problems and maybe chum women to benefits offices or to lawyers. We had a very close relationship with a company called Warner and Co., who geographically were very close to our office and they were just starting up. Brian Warner was the boss and they did most of our legal work for the women – getting interdicts, that kind of thing, and doing custody, mostly interdicts – they were called in those days; nowadays they're called restraining orders, aren't they? Yeah, yeah. And we'd have meetings – I thought meetings were very difficult because being a group of women, obviously we didn't want to have to be overtly hierarchical, so we wanted to have collective meetings which was, which would be a number of people – eight or nine people, say – sitting around in a circle and there wouldn't be a leader of the group, but having said that, there always was a leader, do you know what I mean? It was kind of... I mean it's a very admirable way to operate, but it's also practically quite difficult and often quite cumbersome. And it tended that the same people spoke all the time. It was a mixed bunch – you had graduates, you had people who didn't have nearly as much education and who weren't used to that kind of set up, you had women who, quite often, women who had been in refuges, would come back and volunteer, which was great because they had just a basic empathy with the women in the refuges, which none of the nice middle-class people like me had, you know? Although we could empathise, you know what I mean? We hadn't had that actual... I hadn't had that actual experience, which bothered my husband. And I wonder if it bothered other partners of the women; that he thought that maybe people thought that he battered me. I use the word 'battered' because that's the word that was used then. It did bother him, but anyway, he didn't. Right, sorry – you wanted a typical day...

00:09:28 Thinking about a typical day, you were talking about the meetings, and issues of structure.

Yes, yes, you'd have meetings, then you'd have people going out to refuges. The phone would ring a lot, because it's interesting, I was thinking about how we advertised ourselves. I don't remember – I mean then there was no Internet, so there was no easy access like that. I think we put signs in doctors' surgeries and benefits offices and also we did a lot of public speaking. I didn't because I'm absolutely useless at it – it terrified me – but a lot of talks to the police for example, which I think were probably some of the most difficult talks that were done. They always filled people with fear who were going to do them. You'd almost have to draw lots for that, but it was very important to talk to the police, as it still is, unfortunately. I'm sure Women's Aid is still trying to get the police on board. So, I can't think, it's just a general office and when I was working as a paid worker, I would quite often work at home, doing book-keeping and stuff like that because it was so crowded, you know, it could get oppressive. And I think that was the same for the other Women's Aid groups, too... yes. So I think that's all I can say about that.

00:10:58 *You talked about the connection with a legal firm around the corner and the police. Can you describe, or can you reflect more on interactions with external agencies or external organisations like the social work, police?*

Um, gosh, I find that quite difficult, actually, because I don't think I did a lot of that. I think I did much more admin type jobs, working with kids, and I didn't do as much, I didn't do refuge work, so I wasn't so involved. I mean, I was involved in that: I did on call, which we all did. We would take turns each week being on call all night and so I suppose we were in contact quite often with the police and social work in the middle of the night. Social work department... no, you see, I have a blank there. I'm sorry, apart from going to meetings with them and presenting our case for them funding us. But as far as the activity in relation to the women, I have a feeling there was a lot of hostility, you know? We were kind of, we were up against it, a lot. The general climate was not pleasant towards Women's Aid, I don't think, in those days. It was threatening, you know, it was freeing something out of the closet that people didn't like to look at. We had women who were married to policemen, coming in... so that was difficult. We didn't have very many middle-class women and that was interesting because obviously middle-class women do suffer violence, but it was easier for them in some ways, or it was perceived as being easier for them to leave. I don't believe it is necessarily but it may be easier for them to hide it, or whatever, I don't know. [Pause] So I can't really help you with the outside agency thing very much.

00:13:13 *Did you present your funding cases, do you remember presenting funding cases to the social work department?*

Yes, I do.

What...do you have any...

No, I mean, every time I went, we did get the funding, but it was never as much as we wanted. We obviously wanted a lot more than they were willing to give us, but I don't remember them cutting it. But I probably only did that for two years, maybe three. That's where I'm hazy, as to how long I was actually involved for. They were okay, I think they acknowledged the fact that we were doing a useful service, but they weren't about to reach... their pockets were quite shallow [laughs]. And I don't know anything about the funding nowadays, about Women's Aid groups; I presume it's still the same problem.

00:14:15 *During your time with Women's Aid, did your group have links to Scottish Women's Aid?*

Yes, but I can't think what those were, beyond policy meetings maybe. I can remember going to a couple of meetings in Scottish Women's Aid offices, which took place on a Saturday and I think they were about general policy to do with how Women's Aid should be run. I suppose Edinburgh... I think Edinburgh was the first group in Scotland and so, no I really don't know about that. I can remember one woman who worked at Scottish Women's Aid – her name was Sue and she rode a bike, that's all I can remember [laughs] and I can remember where she lives because I drive past her house every day that I go and visit my daughter in Edinburgh. Not that I visit her every day, you know what I mean. Still, I think that's probably not necessarily useful information [laughs].

But obviously you did have links with Scottish Women's Aid.

Yes, oh yes, we did, yes.

And you do remember some relationship?

Yes

00:15:34 *To slightly change tack... Thinking about the media, and whether you, at your time at Women's Aid, remember any media stories about domestic violence that were in the news?*

Mmm, I do remember... being interviewed about marital rape for a radio programme because I think marital rape had just raised its head, or something. And I remember the whole of the rest of the office was out for the day on a day out: every few months they would take a day away for everyone and because I was only part-time, I would stay in the office, cover the office. And I was terrified because this radio... you know, BBC rang up, and 'Can we do an interview?'. Do you... I can't remember much about media coverage at all. [Pause] No, I can't, I'm afraid. No.

Do you remember anything about your interview?

No. I just remember being very scared and, um, because of being a live interview, but... No, I can't remember, I'm afraid. I'm trying to think. Funny... I can see myself in that office, right now. I can remember that, but I can't remember the content of what I said at all.

But the subject was...

The subject was marital rape, which, as I said, had only just, was a very... I remember having a fierce argument with my husband about it. I mean, it was so alien to a lot of people. Not with *The Archers*, now. Have you been listening to *The Archers*? No?

Ah, no.

No.

But actually, my former flatmate is the director who did that storyline.

Oh, really? It's great. It's a very interesting story. And I think they've done it really well, and I think it's been a real eye opener for people. I suspect that soaps have covered that area before, but I'm not aware of it because I'm not a big soap person, but we do listen to *The Archers*, and we've been riveted by it. It's raised interesting discussions for me with other people, particularly men. And also it's interesting – some people who are avid *Archers* people can't bear to listen to it. What's that about?

Has it helped you, or has it encouraged you, or given you the opportunity to talk about Women's Aid with your former work...

Yes, yes, that's right, and also just about the concept. Particularly [as] this one [storyline] is not so much about physical violence; it's about mental violence and coercion. And I think that's so subtle, that it's often overlooked. There's something about physical violence, which is readily understandable, but I think it's great that the law has changed because the other stuff is equally pernicious. Yes, sorry that's...

00:18:58 *No, that's really interesting and it feeds into the next point, which is turning points, how times have changed and [how] times have changed with Women's Aid. Were there any significant turning points, or changes, when you were there, at any level? And how were these managed by the Women's Aid group?*

I find that a really difficult question, because I can't think of any.

In terms of organisation perhaps, or legislation?

No, we were just the same all the time, I'm afraid. I say 'I'm afraid', but it worked, but it was a bit kind of, it was fairly disorganised, but we managed. And it was very high pressure and I don't think that changed at all, while I was there. And I moved out here about thirty years ago, and it was about a year before that that I stopped being involved with Women's Aid. So I didn't really carry on. Well, I did – I carried on with Kathy Kerr, who had started it, but she was no longer involved in the day to day, and she moved on to other things. So, I'm afraid that I can't answer that question, sorry.

No, that's fine if there weren't big changes in your time.

No there weren't. I don't think, no. Maybe I wasn't there for long enough for big changes to have occurred. Sorry.

00:20:36 *Going back to what we were talking about before in terms of the discussion, obviously things have changed in other ways, but we'll get on to that in a sec. I was just thinking about, I mean obviously things have changed in Scottish politics in recent years, and do you think this has had any impact on the work of Women's Aid, or how domestic abuse is talked about? Thinking about recent changes in Scottish politics.*

I don't know, I think it's still a very hidden thing. I think the feelings that women experience when they are recipients of it, I don't think they'll change at all. I don't think any political change will alter that, of just... feeling of being completely undermined and attempts to obliterate them, not necessarily physically, but emotionally. I think, unfortunately, that will carry on. I don't think any kind of legislation will change that because I think it's attitudinal. I think attitudes are the slowest things to change. I mean, we have these friends staying this weekend and they're these two guys, and they're very... they're okay, but it was interesting how in the end I said 'Do you know, actually it's not funny'. They were making jokes because *The Archers* was on and we were talking about the subject, and men, sort of reformed men, new men, still make jokes about 'Oh, all she needs is a clip round the ear, or something', and I think, that actually isn't funny at any level. To me, you know, and they might dismiss me as a silly old feminist, you know, with no sense of humour, but in the end I just thought, 'No, stop that', and I said that to them. But it's there; it's almost part of... it's almost part of being a man, I think, unfortunately. That's a huge generalisation, I'm a bit prone to those [laughs] when it comes to sexual politics. [Laughing] Oh dear, why be specific when you can generalise, that's what I say. Sorry, I've forgotten the question now.

00:23:10 *It was just thinking... about changes in Scottish politics and whether you think this has had an impact on the work of Women's Aid.*

Well, I mean I wouldn't know because I don't know how Women's Aid functions. I don't know anything about their funding, for example now. It would be nice to think that their funding is better, and certainly the profile of that kind of work I imagine is higher. But I think the basic problem is never going to go away, which is terribly depressing, but I think... people will always pick on people they perceive to be weaker than them. Yes, sad, isn't it – very sad.

00:24:06 *Well, putting aside the political dimension... this now ties in to the next question, which is what do you think the impact of Women's Aid was – both on society, and you at a personal level? There are two separate parts to that question so perhaps... What do you think, from your experience, what was on the impact of Women's Aid on society?*

I think it was probably huge because it did, even at quite a low level, raise the subject and make people face up to it to the reality of what goes on behind closed doors. It was a real eye-opener to me personally – some of the stories I will never forget, the kind of humiliation that women put up with [was] just horrendous and I suppose it all tied in, for me personally, with the rise of awareness

of feminism. I was about – how old was I? Probably in my mid-thirties, late thirties? And I had young children and a lot of the women that came into refuges were in the same age group as me and their life experience was so different from mine. Personally, it was a real eye-opener to me in general because I think I was very naïve and I think a lot of society's naïve. People don't like to look at things like that, they're too difficult to cope with, either because they've had that personal experience or they just think, 'Oh, well, that's those sort of people'. It's very dismissive, 'People will just use their fists rather than just talk things through [in] a nice middle-class way'. That's rubbish. So, it's really hard – you can't gauge what the public thought at the time of it – I think, as I said earlier, I think it was threatening. I do think it threatens: the whole subject.

Can you develop that – do have any specific sort of...

No, I can't, unfortunately, I can't give you examples, I'm afraid. No, I can't. Am I being helpful?

00:26:44 *That's very helpful. It threatened, you got a sense that the subject, the issue...*

Yes, I think the subject is threatening. Yeah, if you go into a group of people and talk to them about Women's Aid work, which we did all the time – I say 'we', I didn't, but other members of the group did. I think the reaction was quite mixed to that. And from the police, too. I would like to think that the police are better about it now, but I don't necessarily agree with that. I did an Open University course about justice, and that confirmed all my worst feelings about the police, I'm afraid. The canteen culture, as they called it in the course, and I don't know how women survive in the police force, I really don't. Must be very difficult.

Did you bring any of your thinking about Women's Aid into the course, or did the course pre-date...

Oh no, the course was quite recent, actually. It was only about five or six years ago. No, I don't think I did actually. No, it wasn't relevant at the time. I don't think I can say anything else about that. No I can't [laughs].

[Laughs] Thinking about The Archers...

Let's think about *The Archers*... [laughs]

00:28:24 Let's think about *The Archers*, and thinking about the impact of Women's Aid. You've been following the storyline and you worked for Women's Aid in that period. I know you talked a little bit earlier about things really not changing attitudinally, could you think about this storyline, the work you did with Women's Aid, and if you do think there are some subtle differences, or really do you think there's no change in attitude?

Well I would say... that's in some ways why the storyline is so interesting to me is the fact that all the views that are being expressed through the various characters are exactly the views that I'm afraid you would have heard thirty years ago, when I was involved with Women's Aid, which makes me think that nothing has evolved at all in that duration. Yes, the law has changed, but often people's attitudes take a long time to catch up with the law – I think. Although it takes a change in attitude with some people in order for the law to be changed, but I think that the majority of the population follows along behind and goes, 'Oh well, that's become legal now, or look at that'. But I think it's very slow, that's something I remember from another Open University course, actually, which was a psychology one, which was about people's attitudes, and how it's incredibly hard to change attitudes. You know, it's really, really difficult. I mean, it's attitudes again, which is central to this storyline – it's to do with... we always used to reckon, you know, we would spend time trying to decide why women were badly treated by men. Part of what we came up with, I mean, what was around as an explanation for it... it was to do with power, basically. But the way it was done was... similar to brainwashing. You would isolate someone and then you would feed them lines which, because they had no other input to them (I gather this is how brainwashing works), they eventually believed it, which is the storyline on *The Archers* and I think that's what you would find in all these women – they were destroyed by these men, by being isolated by them and not allowed to see their family, their friends, or anyone, or go out even, or whatever. So the fact that that storyline is there shows that that's obviously still going on. That's still perceived as the way it works and how it works and why, you know, these men need to control someone, or whatever, I presume. I don't know if I should say this, but one thing that not only I, but other people struggled with was sometimes seeing the women in the refuges treating their children really badly, and knowing that there are all sorts of reasons – these women were under huge stress – but it almost felt like it was (and not everyone would voice this because it was a really unpopular thing to say)... and then you think, well then the child kicks the cat. It was like a kind of power structure, going down from someone to someone weaker, and looking for someone weaker. I'm not saying that that was conscious at all, but it happened. I know I could be awful to my children too, not because my husband was being horrible

to me, but you can be horrible too... and at that stage I was probably a bit naïve. You know, I didn't recognise that. Sorry, I've forgotten what the question was.

00:32:55 *The impact of Women's Aid on society and obviously there's The Archers storyline that you've been following and discussing with people, I think highlights whether things might not have changed for women in this context, but thinking about attitudes towards it, popular attitudes, public attitudes and the impact that Women's Aid had on society. Also you talked a little bit about the impact of your work with Women's Aid on yourself and I wondered if there's anything else... You've obviously reflected on some of the courses you took on psychology and justice, and linked that, in your own mind, back to the work [with Women's Aid], even if you couldn't put it into the course. Is there anything else you can draw out of the impact on you, on your future career, or anything from the work you did in Women's Aid?*

For some reason that seems like a really hard question. It made me value women a lot, my work on Women's Aid. It did. I wouldn't say it made me negative towards men, but it taught me a great deal about how men and women operate. And working with that group of women, we had a great time. If someone had a birthday, we'd all get together at someone's house and we'd all bring food and we used to have Steptoe parties – you know what Steptoe parties are?

No, I don't.

They're clothes-swap parties. Now we had these thirty-five years ago, which is a long time ago...

...and those were with women you were working with?

Yes, and we'd get together and have a good laugh and get pissed and eat and drink and be merry. We used to do that if someone was leaving, or if someone had a birthday and... there were difficulties. I think any group that works closely together in a stressful situation is going to have problems, but I think we managed it really well. I still have a vague idea that I'd quite like to live with a group of women [laughs] even now, even though I live with my husband. I've got a different husband now, even though I live with my husband now. I think women are alright, [laughs] more than alright really.

It had a big impact...

Yes, yes. It did. And I had great admiration for Kathy Kerr, who started it all, who sadly died, I don't know how many years ago now, five, six years ago? Do you know how long it was? No. She was an amazing woman...

And that's how your connection started. It was through knowing her, she was your neighbour?

Yes, she lived in the same street.

00:36:06 *And did the relationship continue? Were you still friends during that period when you were working for Women's Aid?*

Yes, yes. And, you know, we were [friends] afterwards, but it was more peripheral once I moved out here. Geography got in the way, but she worked tirelessly for other people. She always had an open door, and an open heart for people, you know, one of those people. She went on to work with alcoholics; then she worked with Rape Crisis as well. Then she worked for incest survivors, too, latterly. I'm still vaguely in touch with one of her children, through one of my children who works with her.

So the personal really was political.

Yes, absolutely. [Pause] It all seems a very long time ago. It's interesting though, talking about it, even though there are huge gaps in my memory [laughs], but I think there are in everyone's, after that amount of time. So how long have we been talking for?

00:37:34 *I don't know, but can I just... we have a final question. What do you think the future holds? I know that's a rather vague question, but in terms of your experience of working with Women's Aid and the issues surrounding coercive control and domestic abuse? You have intimated some of your concerns, but what do you think it [the future] holds? And, at a more concrete level, what would you like to see happening next in terms of the issues that have obviously been really important to you?*

I think I'd probably like more education in schools. Yes, I would like more education in schools. I would like more refuges. I don't think the need for those, sadly, is ever going to go away. And I would like a change of attitude in the police to take women's reporting seriously. That's a bit pie in the sky, isn't it? And a decent level of funding, which I assume they don't have. I feel kind of bad that I don't know much about what goes on with Women's Aid these days. Talking about it, I think, well...

[and I would like] more publicity. There are campaigns on the television etc., and I think there should be more of those, but you need the resources behind them, so that when women do see those, they know that they're going to get the support they need. I don't know if you need any more changes in the law. There was always this kind of grey area because when women reported something (I don't know enough about the law now and if it's changed), but there was a reluctance sometimes on women's part to charge their husbands because they knew that the way the law was, in two or three days the man would be out of prison again and he would give her hell for it, so she... But there was, I thought, a case for the police actually charging someone because if he had done to someone in the street what he had done to his wife, then... But then the police would say, 'Well, if she doesn't want to back up the charges, then we can't do it', and that would be useful – I don't know if that's the case yet that the law has changed like that. I suspect it's always been the case that the police could charge someone, but maybe they needed more evidence: they needed the wife's evidence – maybe that was it. I don't know. I'm sure there's room for the law to be more supportive and certainly for marital rape, I don't think... I think that should be, I was going to say, a complete taboo. That seems obvious talking to a woman, do you know what I mean? But all that came out in *The Archers* again as well, people saying, 'Well, if you're married, that's what you expect'. Well, you don't expect to be raped, but you expect to be available for sex all the time. You see, I think that's an attitudinal thing as well. I bet that attitude still is very prevalent.

00:41:29 Do you think... You talked about education changing attitudes and your concern about attitudes...

Yes, I've gone on a bit about that, haven't I? [laughs]

Yes, it's interesting. It is interesting because obviously you've got the practical issues, you've got the law, but then there's attitudes. You talked about going to schools [and] education. What would you like to see?

I don't know. I think that school is underused as far as helping people enter the real world with the right attitudes. I must stop using that word [laughs], so I don't think children necessarily... I mean it's a bit like the sex education thing: people say, 'Oh well, you shouldn't really give children sex education'. Quite a lot of people say, 'Because it means they'll have sex too soon'. Well, I think that's absolute rubbish. I think they could do with some good, sound advice and they're not all going to get it from their parents. And if they get it all from the Internet, they're going to get such a warped view

of what relationships are like and what sex can be like that... I don't know how you teach it, but also to teach how to be respectful. I don't know how you teach that because probably a lot of that does come from the home. But just a wider range of social issues, I think, should be part of the curriculum; everything from how to load a washing machine to how to treat your partner [laughs]. That's rather a sweeping area, isn't it. [Pause] Get them young. Probably when they're about fifteen it's too late, isn't it.

00:43:41 *Is that what you think? Do you think as young as possible would be effective?*

Yes, I do think so, but I mean, on the other hand, I think at that age they don't really understand what's involved in having a relationship with someone, do they? So maybe it's... but who knows? If you sow the seeds of good things in their minds then [pause] you might get fruit later, when they're actually in... because you can't teach what it's like to be with someone, can you? You can't. It's all a horrible shock, isn't it [laughs]. No, sorry [laughs]. Spot the old cynic [laughs]. No, I'm not a cynic, I'm a realist. So, yes, a bit more education, maybe, even just talking about abuse. I presume they have talks in, I don't know what, their social sciences – is that what it come under? What would it come under?

I think it's personal and social education.

Right, I mean, you'll know because your children have just left school. Do they cover things like that for your children? [interviewer shakes her head] They didn't? What did they do in personal...

I'm not terribly sure...

[Laughs] Right. Well, there you go [laughs]. Well, I think they should. But I quite often think that about things, you know, that children should be taught about things, like that. Difficult subjects, like war, for example, instead of in a history lesson, let's talk about what's going on round the world now and why, you know? That kind of thing, which I think is much more important than who killed who on what battlefield in 1393 – who cares? [laughs].

I'm a historian.

I'm sorry [laughs]. What a faux pas! [laughs]

Don't put me out of a job [laughs].

What's your area? You said it's gender... yes. Anyway, that's irrelevant. I think you should have a balanced curriculum.

00:46: 03 *But you think that, obviously... with your concern about... thinking about what you'd like to see happen from your own experience, you have talked about how... I mean you are concerned about the police, you are concerned about reporting rape in marriage, but getting to attitudes is something you'd like to see happen.*

[Agrees] I think that things like putting storylines like that in soap operas is probably a really effective way to reach a lot of people and make people think because it's a very popular medium for people, isn't it. Much more effective than a two-second ad in the telly, when they're all off getting a cup of tea. [Pause] And more funding, so that they can provide lots of supportive services. Well, I can't think of any more. I was just thinking that I met my second husband at a Kids' Aid disco [laughs]. I've just remembered that.

So it really did have an incredible impact on you at a personal level, as well as informing your outlook.

In fact, my first husband blamed the break-up of our marriage on feminism... and he's probably right. But that's probably not relevant to your history project, is it? [Laughs] You can cut that bit out.

End interview