

## Angela Melvin 24.05.25

**Interviewer:** My name is Hannah and I am interviewing Angela Melvin for the Young Women's Movement Young Women Remember Project. To begin, please can you tell me your full name, where you're from and your previous role with YWCA Scotland.

**Interviewee:** Yes, so my name is Angela Melvin, I'm originally from Liverpool but I've worked in Glasgow, I've lived in Glasgow for almost 28 years. My previous role, there's been lots, I've been with the organisation for 14 years, since 2011.

**Interviewee:** So I started as a Building Capacity Officer and I have had various roles and I'm now currently Programme Lead for the Young Women's Movement.

**Interviewer:** So just some questions about yourself, if you don't mind how old are you?

**Interviewee:** [Laughing] I'm going to be 50 this year.

**Interviewer:** Where were you born? Where did you grow up?

**Interviewee:** So I was born in Liverpool, I grew up in Liverpool for the first kind of 5-6 years, then we moved to Cheshire and then we moved back to Liverpool and then we moved back to Cheshire. So mainly England and I've been in Scotland, in Glasgow for about 28 years now.

**Interviewer:** Is Glasgow the first known place you've lived in Scotland or have you lived elsewhere?

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And what other jobs have you had before joining the movement?

**Interviewee:** Oh, well, being almost 50, the list is long. So, well I've always worked, even when I was in school, so from the age of 13, which you can't do now, but yeah. So, I've worked in cafes, I've worked in bars, I was a support worker for a long time. I worked supporting young people in Liverpool who were transitioning from young people's to adult mental health services, so providing that social support. Lots of different jobs, very varied, but really for the past 28 years, mainly it's been around some form of support work in that kind of sector, in the third sector.

**Interviewer:** And you said that you're a programme lead with the Young Women's Movement now?

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So now just moving to some questions about your time at the organisation. So you said you joined in 2011?

**Interviewee:** I did, yes.

**Interviewer:** So, how did you find out about the organisation?

**Interviewee:** It's quite interesting because I was, I'd moved to Glasgow for the second time, so I've been kind of back from Glasgow, back home to England and then back, and I was working with my husband, at his business, and I was really feeling the need to get back into the work that I love doing, and that's working with women, with young women, working in that kind of community. So I was actively looking to move back to my passion, and I found out about it, I think I found it maybe on Good Moves or something like that at the time, it was a wee while ago so I can't remember, but I was actively looking to move back into the third sector.

**Interviewer:** And then so was that, you were working with the movement initially when you first started, was that a career or were you volunteering in different projects?

**Interviewee:** So I literally first, I was employed, but I do know a lot of my colleagues at the time had actually started working as volunteers. So one of my colleagues now, Heidi, she's been with the organisation even longer than me, she actually started as a volunteer as well. So when I joined, it was YWCA Glasgow and we'll probably go into that in a wee bit because there's been lots of different variations. So when I first moved into our organisation, I was working for Glasgow YWCA at the time.

**Interviewer:** So what projects and initiatives did you take part in over the years?

**Interviewee:** Oh, that's a big question, lots. So when I first started with Glasgow YWCA, I was Building Women's Capacity Officer, I think that was the full title of the role and that was really to respond to women's needs. So at that time, we didn't focus on working with young women, so it was women 16 plus, so there was a huge diversity of ages. So, it was really responding to their needs, but we done a lot more. So there was like a balance between educational stuff and skills work and then kind of social stuff. So I used to run a weekly social group, which was a huge group. It was amazing. It was so much fun and we do like lots of different activities and then we would also like work with colleges. So the three colleges in Glasgow and we'd facilitate getting lecturers in to do some work around, it could be computer literacy skills, it might have been ESOL skills. So it was really varied, but there was that good balance between like the really nice, fun social stuff and the harder skills that, you know, women could take forward into their life and use how they needed or wanted to use it.

**Interviewer:** How many people tended to take part in the social aspects and the programmes?

**Interviewee:** A lot...Because I've had so many different roles, it's quite varied. So we did have a space in 3 Newton Terrace. That was when we were Glasgow YWCA and that was a three story townhouse building and that was always full of women, women from every country in the world you can imagine who were living in Glasgow and new to Scotland. So it was extremely busy. We also had a creche there as well. So we have free child care facilities.

So we had there was a lot of people. I think there was one point I think probably we were due to write a funding bid. So we kind of were chatting to the women and we just wanted to get a real idea of the diversity of the women we were working with and I think, don't quote me on this, but I think this number's right. At one point at that kind of hour in the day there was 46 different languages spoken by the women at the centre. So that might give you an idea, and of course some of the women spoke four or five different languages because they were all amazing, incredible women but that might give you an idea of how busy the place was and how many things were on and there was something for everybody there to really get engaged with and feel part of.

**Interviewer:** Was it a membership structure or were people just able to turn up to events?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, it wasn't a membership structure, no. So we did have a referral structure, but that could be self-referral. Or we would work with organisations. For example, British Red Cross would often contact us and say, you know, we're working with somebody who's really interested in doing this or needs to make new friends, they're new to Glasgow. And we'd be like, well, if they want...And it was all, you know, voluntary. It had to be driven by the women themselves. They can come to the social groups, see if they like it. So it was a very soft approach to engaging with women. So there wasn't necessarily a membership, it was more kind of, if you want to be part of it, you can be part of it. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So you said you had a physical space at the time.

**Interviewee:** We did.

**Interviewer:** Was that where you tended to host most of your events? Or did you use other spaces?

**Interviewee:** We hosted everything there. Unless we had maybe, we kind of secured a bit of funding to do anything in particular like an event but the majority of everything, every offering was offered from that space and we had a lot of space there. Yeah, so that's kind of, we used to call it the Glasgow Centre, that's kind of, yeah.

**Interviewer:** I was going to ask, was that just for the Glasgow branch or was this for the wider YWCA?

**Interviewee:** So at the time, that was only for the Glasgow branch because Glasgow YWCA was standalone, and I'm sure, kind of going through the archives and the history of YWCA, the Young Women's Movement, it's really interesting in the sense that... I mean, the history of YWCA in general, there was different pockets and there was kind of the YWCA GB and then Scotland and Glasgow was outwith Scotland. It was quite complicated in a way. So yeah, the history of it's a little complicated if you're not involved in it and you don't know it.

**Interviewer:** So what was on the agenda really for the YWCA Glasgow? What were the main concerns of the organisation?

**Interviewee:** The main aim of the organisation at that time, and obviously we can talk about the Young Women's Movement kind of later on, but the main focus at that time was to just

give women a safe space. A space where they could come to, they could have really good quality childcare. So kind of taking away as many barriers. So the focus was around really that safety, that community, and then kind of the cherry on the cake, I guess, would be kind of learning those social skills or maybe learning skills that could support with employability or the next steps in the woman's individual journey. So there wasn't necessarily, how do I phrase this? There wasn't necessarily a strategic plan which probably would have been quite useful to have. However, the women who experienced the centre and the team there and each other and the offerings we had, they made that place so special and it really was a lovely place full of energy and full of warmth and full of diversity, but the focus was really just to bring women together in a safe space where they could learn new things and get to know other women.

**Interviewer:** Do you know how the YWCA Glasgow differentiated from the wider YWCA Scotland or the specific programmes you've worked on?

**Interviewee:** I can't really answer that because I'm not too sure however, I think, yeah, I don't know about that. So I don't want to answer that purely because I don't want to tell you something that I don't know. I just do know that at that time it felt quite fractured and I know there were other kind of arms of YWCA split off. So for example, there was a YWCA in Cupar and I don't know if that was affiliated with YWCA Scotland or YWCA Europe. So it's a very interesting history.

**Interviewer:** So what was your day-to-day basis of your involvement at the time?

**Interviewee:** At the time, working with partners. Well, firstly supporting the women who came through the door. So that was the main focus, the main thing but we done that in lots of different ways. So that might be working with partners to bring in some new opportunities for women. So if women were saying to us, you know, we would really like, for example, support with our CV, writing a CV, then we would then or I would then look at, right, who can we partner with? So do some scoping and exercises, start those conversations, kind of working out a partnership. There was very little budget, I will say that at the time. So we were running things on a shoestring. So it was about having to be really, really creative. Often we would organise groups and classes ourselves. So we'd go and get the skills we needed. Yeah, in terms of that funding element, we were kind of restricted as to what we could do. We didn't have a huge amount of money to spend. So we had to get quite creative with how we'd done things but really supporting women and supporting the team so that we could all do what we were there to do and that focus was on young women and women having a really good experience of being with us and being able to take what they've learned forward in however way they wanted to do that.

**Interviewer:** How many people were working in the YWCA Glasgow at the time?

**Interviewee:** Oh, okay. So we had a creche team and the creche team, I feel that there was probably about ten, eight to ten members of staff on that. The senior lead team, we had three members of staff and then I think the wider team, there was probably about... five? So, it was quite a big team but it was a big centre and we did kind of offer a lot, so, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So how did your involvement with the organisation impact your regular work? Out of your... Beyond the work, do you carry things with you?

**Interviewee:** It's my...I mean, obviously working with young women, it's my passion. It's something that is really, really important to me and it's something that is embedded in my everyday life. It really is important to me, which is why I've been with the organisation through lots of different changes for 14 years. I genuinely feel so, so lucky to be part of it and for this to be my job. I'm very lucky and I'm very grateful and I'm very thankful for it but for me, I'm quite boundaried with my work. So it's really difficult because particularly if you're working with some marginalised communities, you hear some stuff and it can be really tough but my job, the way I think about it, my job and my role is to hold that space for young women. It's not about me, it's about them. So I need to hold that space. I try not to take anything home with me in that sense but it can be tricky because obviously the work we do can be tough but my job is to hold that space and we have really good structures in place in the Young Women's Movement. So the team is supported and our collective well-being is really at the forefront of what we do. So I don't know whether that's answered your question. I hope it did.

**Interviewer:** I worded that slightly poorly but that's a nice answer.

**Interviewee:** Oh, thank you. Do you want to frame it in another way so you can get the answer?

**Interviewer:** I think that covers it.

**Interviewee:** That's perfect.

**Interviewer:** So, I think you touched on it a little bit about the organisation, the fracturing, the restructuring because the YWCA transitioned into being the Young Women's Movement.

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So how was that experience of working there and staying involved during the transition?

**Interviewee:** I mean, for me, I think because I've been around the third sector for a while, I'm kind of... the team... I'm about to laugh because the team always say that I'm unflappable. I pretty much I am unflappable. So for me, I had faith in where we were going. I knew what our aim was. I know that we've always centred young women in that. So I think because I've always kept that in the forefront of my mind, it's never really been about me and my concern about it but I've always had a lot of belief in my colleagues and what we do. So I didn't really worry about it too much. However, there were times of change and transition that it was quite trick and you know, there was a lot involved in it because it was Glasgow YWCA. Then we merged with YWCA Scotland. So we became YWCA Scotland, the Young Women's Movement. Then we had a merge with Y people, then we de-merged, and now we are where we are, where we are, the Young Women's Movement. So there's been a lot of change, but I've been okay with it. I think sometimes change brings really good

opportunities. I feel where we are now as an organisation, this, for me, feels the most together, secure, kind of, we've got our strategy, we know where we're going, we know who we are. So, I think it, it all happened for a reason.

**Interviewer:** Maybe on that, can you tell us a little bit more about the role that you're currently in today and what you do within the organisation?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, so my role is programmes lead. So I support the programmes team and we deliver. So we are mainly delivering opportunities for young women. That might be programmes, projects, events but the majority of our work is that face-to-face work. There's different elements of that because that varies. So we do a lot of work. We do work in schools. So we're working with P7 pupils. Then we do work in community spaces and then we also do work that is kind of centred and focused on then being taken by our research and policy team and young women into spaces of decision-making. So it's quite varied, but young women's needs are varied. So we adapt to suit that but yeah, so I'm very lucky that there's an incredible team there and very experienced facilitators. So, yeah and obviously I feed into kind of strategic things and senior leadership team conversations and policies, things like that. So yeah. Quite varied. Interesting. Yeah. Very different on a day-to-day basis. But again, the focus is always on – my job is to support the programmes team to be able to meet the needs of young women. That's my job.

**Interviewer:** And maybe to close up this section roughly, what do you think the biggest – what were the biggest changes from when you started working in the organisation to now?

**Interviewee:** Oh, so many. So, so many. Let me think. I think – well, one of them, because there's a lot and we've probably – we've got till 12 today, so I could be here all day talking about it but I think the biggest thing is that real focus on our vision, our mission, our strategy. We know where we're going. We absolutely centre young women's voices in that. So I think that for me – there's lots of other amazing positive things, but that for me is the one thing that we do extremely well and we do it on lots of different levels. So whether that's we are actually in a school delivering a session about leadership skills and equality to P7 pupils, or whether that's young women are in parliament presenting evidence that they've designed through a project. So, yeah, but I feel that we really have a clear idea where we are and that we're here to platform young women's voices and that feels – for me, personally, that feels the strongest it's ever felt in my 14 years.

**Interviewer:** That's very exciting.

**Interviewee:** It is very exciting. Like I said, I'm very lucky. Very lucky.

**Interviewer:** So you were drawn to the organisation because you wanted to keep working with young women.

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What did the organisation mean to you?

**Interviewee:** A lot. It means – I'm very grateful. I really genuinely, I love my job. I am so lucky to work with the team that I work with but for me, it means that, almost selfishly, I'm doing my bit to support young women and to platform their voices to get them into the spaces that they need to be in to make changes for the next generation of women. So that's quite a big thing, I guess and I'm a very tiny, tiny part of that but I think that's really important. I don't want things to be the same for young women and I feel genuinely like, right now, things are regressing, and so it just makes it – gives me more of a fire in my belly to keep doing what we do.

**Interviewer:** Has that changed much since when you first started working at the organisation?

**Interviewee:** Oh, it's absolutely – it's strengthened since I first started. It really has. I think the more I know, the more I learn. I'm learning something new every day. The more I speak to young women, the more I see, kind of, we take one step forward and then ten steps – not even two steps back, ten steps back. So for me, it feels that passion and determination is even stronger right now than it was 14 years ago.

**Interviewer:** So when you first started, did you have any – what were your initial thoughts going into it, I suppose, then? You had this fire and this passion?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, my initial thoughts going into it. I think probably 14 years ago, I was probably like, you know, I want to be part of something that can make a difference. I want to be part of supporting somebody's journey, a woman's journey, however they want that to look like. So I think that was kind of my driving force and because I've always kind of – well, not always, because obviously my job history was very varied when I was young but like my adult life, I've always worked in that kind of third sector or supportive space. So it just feels natural and actually, the majority of my family work either supporting young people or...My mum was a manager of a mental health service. So for me, that kind of – I don't know. Is it in my DNA? I don't know. It's just part of who I am. Am I talking too much?

**Interviewer:** No, no, you're great.

**Interviewee:** Just tell me if I am.

**Interviewer:** If you need a break or anything.

**Interviewee:** I'm good. I'm fine, thank you.

**Interviewee:** If you need a break, though, it's fine. I can talk forever, you know.

**Interviewer:** So this is just broad questions...

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Again, your time with the organisation. So, I think you've already covered this, but regarding your involvement, you felt very passionate. You felt like you were doing your

part. I'm not sure what my question is. What's your favourite memory from being a part of the organisation?

**Interviewee:** Oh my goodness. Right, that is a tricky one because genuinely, there are so many. What's my favourite memory? [Pause] I mean, I think not so much a memory, but well, there is a few. So I think often, when you're in that day-to-day work, it's when you see young women together in those spaces. So for example, like at the birthday party or a status launch or you're in a committee room, you're watching young women give evidence. That, for me, they're the things that really like, ah, this is why we do what we do. When you see young women come together and they're mobilising, they're making change, they're presenting their demands. That, for me, so there's lots of memories around that. So not one specific, but lots of memories, but yeah.

**Interviewee:** Is there one specific achievement that stands out to you the most, or one memory or one..?

**Interviewee:** Oh, no, I think they all hold like a little special place for me but in terms of like one special achievement, I think often because part of my role now, so I'm involved in writing funding reports and stuff. So I see things on a day-to-day basis. We're really good as a team with communication. So we hear about all the lovely things that happen and all, you know, the achievements young women have made and, oh, I'm at, like some of the important teams, I'm at a session in Parliament with young women and then somebody will say, oh, we're doing this. So that, I think, kind of all comes together to create those brilliant memories but being part of writing funding reports, when you're looking at the stats or the actual numbers, or you're looking at, you know, so many young women went on to do this. Or so many young women spoke at Parliament or, you know, so many young women were involved in this piece of policy. That's when I really think, wow, this is incredible. What young women are achieving for one, because it's not us, they're achieving it but I think that's when I feel the biggest sense of achievement. When I literally see it, it's like the impact the work we do creates for me. That always gives me that sense of, not even achievement, because it's not my achievement, it's their achievement but that sense of pride and happiness. I like that.

**Interviewer :** It might be the same answer, but are there any particular achievements or milestones that you think the organisation were really important and should have been there today?

**Interviewee:** Again, so many. I think, you know, I think because I've got 14 years of history to [laughing] draw on here, that's a tricky one to answer. I think the way the team worked together to make that space. So it's not necessarily one achievement, as in it was one day or one event. I think the fact that how we work together, how we really take that approach of centring young women's voices and their needs. I think as an organisation, that's probably our biggest achievement and the fact that we can do that in many different ways. So we can do that in a community setting, we can do that in a research and policy setting. I think that's our biggest achievement. Does that make sense? I hope so [laughing].

**Interviewer:** Perhaps we want to touch on some more of the logistical sides of your time. So you said you had the initial main office in Glasgow. When we were talking you mentioned, you had two other spaces as well?

**Interviewee:** Yes, so we had the space in Three Newton Terrace, then we moved to a space in Bath Street in the city centre, and I want to say it was 13 Bath Street maybe, Albert Chambers I think it was called, and then from there we moved to our Glasgow centre in the east end of Glasgow, so in Deniston, and we were there for quite a while. So we've had quite a few different moves along the way.

**Interviewer:** What were the differences in those spaces? Could you still provide the same, so you had a crèche for children?

**Interviewee:** So that did have to change actually. So when we were in Three Newton Terrace, we had a townhouse, so the ground floor was our reception area, then we had rooms that women could use for classes or groups, and the basement area was where the crèche was. It was a really lovely, lovely space, and it was so nice seeing the kids were always so happy there, and the crèche team were amazing, they really were. When we moved to Albert Chambers, Bath Street, we couldn't have a crèche anymore, and we'd actually lost some funding for the crèche, so that move also coincided with Glasgow YWCA joining YWCA Scotland. So yeah, that space really honestly, in my opinion, wasn't fit for purpose, and it just, I think we lost that real sense of that vibe of family and that family space in Newton Terrace, and that's, we were chatting kind of in the break, and most of the women that came there said it just felt like a family, it was really such an open space, and I feel because where we moved, and it was a case of we kind of had to find a space quite quickly, it probably wasn't the best space for us, and we weren't actually there for that long before we found the space in Deniston, so that was the Well Park Care Keeping Enterprise Centre, so it was an old school, and we had a lovely space at the top floor with two rooms, so we had a computer suite and a big room, and a little room at the back if anybody needed a bit of privacy or a bit of, you know, time away, and that was really a lovely, lovely space, really nice space, and we picked that sense of community back up while we were there, and it was a very central location for women to get to as well, so yeah, that was a lovely space to be in.

**Interviewer:** Can you expand a little bit more on the impact that the work had on the local community?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, I think for us, as an organisation, being based in spaces and communities where it was easier for women to access, or young women to access, that was really important. I think the impact on the community was often services were always centred around city centre locations, and I think having something more community-based, the impact it had for women is they felt like it was for them, so we did have women and young women who would travel in to the space, but often women who were in that community, and the East End of Glasgow is a really big community and there's lots of incredible services there, but we were very much welcomed into that space, and I think women in that community were like, oh, this is the space for me, so I think in terms of that impact, it just made things a little more accessible for young women and women to be a part of.

**Interviewer:** I imagine when you're changing locations that, not necessarily the relationship with the community, but then the impact would change?

**Interviewee:** I think, I'm not necessarily sure the impact changed, because I think as an organisation we've always been really, really good at building honest, open, transparent relationships, not just with people in, kind of, decision-making powers, but people in local authorities and councils. I think we also really do a great job of engaging with other community groups and organisations and service providers, so I think in that sense we've always had a very strong connection with communities, and that's something that we actively do, and it's something that we actively maintain, and the success of delivering our services, our outreach services, our community services, depends on that as well.

**Interviewer:** Can you maybe tell us a little bit more about the relationship with other organisations that you were working with at the time, either in the local community or more broadly?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, sure. So in the kind of sense of my role, it's supporting the team, and also I've been in the position of being the one to be starting those conversations and building those relationships. So yeah, it's something that is really important to make sure that we are providing a holistic wraparound service for young women. We know what we're experts in, and then we know that there's other incredible organisations and communities that we need to be talking with, and we need to be sharing information with, and we need to be having conversations with, so that we can then signpost young women to them, because we might not always be able to provide what young women need. So that, it's really just about being open and honest. It's about, oh, hi, I'm Ange from the Young Women's Movement. I'd love to know a little bit more about your work. Can we meet up for a chat? Can we jump on Teams? And really finding out what other people do, so then we know if we're talking to a young woman and she says, oh, I really need something around this. We're like, oh, that's great. We know this organisation. We've had conversations with them, but also it helps that joined-up approach to supporting young women, because like I say, we know what we're good at. We know what we're experts in, but there's so many incredible organisations that are experts in that field, so if we all are talking, then we can provide the best for young women.

**Interviewer:** On that, were there other – you said that you've helped other projects, organisations in giving the young women support for them? I'll restart that sentence [laughing].

**Interviewee:** No worries at all.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any examples of other projects that the Young Women's Movement has contributed to or other movements?

**Interviewee:** Oh, God, so many. So, so many. Yeah, so – oh, goodness. So we have really, really strong links with rape crisis centres, with women's aid centres, with the organisation. So we need to be able to, when we're working with young women... And kind of the approach is a little different in terms of the Young Women's Movement, because we are not

– the thing is, we're not a crisis support centre. That's not what we do, and we're not that one-to-one support centre, so it's really important that, for example, if we're working with a young woman, and she might disclose something in the group, or she might come to one of the facilitators or one of the team members and say, you know, look, this is happening, and I need a bit of help with this, then we can say, right, okay. So we can maybe support you to – we know of this service that might be useful for you. Would you like us to introduce you? Would you like us to support you with that? So I think in terms of that, but, yeah, and not even just on that level, not on that crisis support level. It doesn't have to be that. It might be that we're working with somebody and they really enjoyed, you know, the ESOL class, and they're like, oh, well, we've got great links with the college, so you can go and do your next level of ESOL with that. So it's about using those relationships to make sure that young women are getting what they need. So, yeah but there's lots of different examples, because we work with lots and lots of different organisations.

**Interviewer:** So at the time you were working, when it was the YWCA, what was the wider social lens, political scene, what was going on in the world?

**Interviewee:** At the time? Oh my goodness, so 14 years ago, where were we? Not that much further forward than we are now, or further back, I should say, and actually, the interesting thing about before we joined YWCA Scotland, the Young Women's Movement, before we became the Young Women's Movement, in terms of our work, it wasn't really political, and there was no kind of collective voice and action. There was no mobilising. It was more focused on educational skills, I want to say, and social skills but honestly, I mean, to answer the question, I don't think there's much. In fact, I think in so many ways, young women are facing a much tougher time in terms of the decisions that are happening politically than they were then.

**Interviewer:** Very interesting.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. Sad. Yeah, and frustrating but yeah, that's what I think.

**Interviewer:** On that, as the organisation has gone on and has got a much stronger political focus, how do you feel about how the movement's evolved over the years?

**Interviewee:** I think the movement's evolved in a way that young women want it to evolve, because this is not something that kind of, as a team, we woke up and said, look, I think we should do this. Even when we're kind of planning our strategy, we've got an advisory panel in Glasgow, so they advise on our work, we've got an advisory collective, they advise on kind of strategic directions, so it's not that I would say, oh, we needed to do this, this has been shaped by young women, so it's absolutely the right direction to go in, because they're telling us that that's what they want but I think right now, in terms of the way the world is and the rise in misogyny and that misogynistic rhetoric, I think it's much needed, and I'm so glad that young women have decided for themselves that that's the direction that our organisation needs to go in.

**Interviewer:** On that, as things have been changing, it makes sense that your role, the work that you've been doing has changed alongside of it. What kind of opportunities have you encountered? These are two questions.

**Interviewee:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** What skills have you learned from your work?

**Interviewee:** Okay, so opportunities, every day there's something new to learn. Every day, and I do have access to a lot of training opportunities and growth and development opportunities. What we've done is we get access to a lot of training, so we can identify our training, so, in terms of our professional growth and our capacity growth and our skill set growth, we have a really lovely, kind of, set times during the year that we can go and do what we have identified for ourselves we need to do. There's that element of that training, training that we do. In terms of growth, I think just working with a really diverse team and working in a really collaborative way, we learn a lot from each other. We learn a lot from young women. They give us our direction. We facilitate that to make it happen. What was the second part of the question?

**Interviewer:** Just about the skills that you've learned and what do you tend to use the most maybe on a day-to-day basis?

**Interviewee:** Okay, so that's interesting. I think in terms of my role now, it's more kind of line management skills I use and people skills because that's my job. My job is to support a team so they can do what we need to do to make sure that young women are being platformed and young women are being given opportunities to be in the spaces they need to be in to make change, so, right now, it's more kind of that line management skills, people skills, yeah, organisational skills, I have to be very, very organised because I lead on quite a number of projects. The programmes team in terms of what we do is a very busy team. We have lots of different projects and lots of different partners and lots of different offerings. So yeah, I think skills-wise, I'm pretty organised. That's a good skill to have.

**Interviewer:** When you say that the skills that you tend to use, obviously your role across the organisation will have changed, but when you say that you first started, when you're working with YWCA, do you think you're using different skill sets?

**Interviewee:** I do. I mean, I think that the one skill set that has always been a constant is people skills. You need to enjoy working with people. You need to really have that kind of passion for equality. Not that that's a skill, that's a passion, obviously, but I think when I first started, a lot of the skills was being able to think on your feet because, as I was saying earlier, there was zero budget, very limited funding, so we had to be really...Creativity, that was a skill you had to draw on a lot. You had to be very creative, meeting the needs of young women with tiny, tiny budgets and often very, very limited capacity. So I would say, yes, skills have definitely changed, but they should because as an organisation, we've developed, we've grown, directions have changed slightly, so you've just got to be adaptable and use those skills, but also if you've not got them, kind of learn them.

**Interviewer:** What would you like the future of the movement to look like going forward?

**Interviewee:** We will always centre young women's voices in that. I know that that will not change because that's who we are as an organisation and that's what our whole team believe in. What would I like for the organisation going forward? Here's a big one for you. I would like us to not need to exist [laughing]. That's what I would like. I would like us to not have to be here. I would like equality to just be something we don't have to think about, something we don't have to fight for, something we don't have to demand. So that, yeah, very strange answer probably, but my ideal would be that we didn't need to exist because the whole world was safe for young women and girls.

**Interviewer:** Maybe, touching on that, do you feel as though you're part of a global movement?

**Interviewee:** Absolutely, I do, I mean we've just recently had some of the young women participants involved in YWCA Europe events, so, yeah, I do feel very connected and I think it's really important because we take a very intersectional approach to our feminism and to our work. I think it's so important to feel connected to that wider movement and to understand and recognise that young women face so many different layers of inequality so yeah, I do feel connected to a wider movement and obviously our focus is young women in Scotland but, you know, equality for girls and young women everywhere for me is something important so I totally feel connected, and I think that the movement is absolutely connected to that as well but our focus is on Scotland right now but yeah, if opportunities come up we're absolutely keen to learn more about them and to look at other people's work so yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer:** You mentioned that the YWCA in Glasgow was separate from the wider YWCA organisation when you were working there at the time, did you feel that the YWCA impact was a global project or was it more focused?

**Interviewee:** That's a really good question actually and I'd not really thought about that until you asked it but no, I don't feel as though there was as much of a global connection. It felt very much like we were our own island and I think in hindsight now that probably wasn't the best way to approach it however that's how it was at the time and there was a lot of fracture in the history of YWCA's and some YWCA's still retain that very kind of religious focus but Glasgow YWCA didn't the YWCA was there in the name because of the history so that's one thing that remained that we didn't want to lose that hundred years of incredible history and all the incredible work that had come before us by other women but it did feel kind of, it felt standalone, it felt like it was just us and I do believe there was... I don't know this again so don't quote me but I do believe there was connections to world YWCA I think there was a membership to world YWCA but I don't necessarily think those opportunities to engage with that filtered down to any of the women that used to come to the centre or to the staff team and that's I don't know why, I'm not saying that was a bad thing that's just how it was so, yeah, very kind of standalone.

**Interviewer:** Very interesting. I know you just touched on part of the YWCA history and while we were chatting outside earlier you mentioned that when you were part of the

YWCA Glasgow you did you do your own heritage project can you tell me a little bit more about that?

**Interviewee:** Yes, so I can tell you what I know that project was led by Zoe at the time, she was one of the team members she was, Zoe Jones, she was incredible so that kind of happened I believe in between, I feel it was around about 2015 2013-15 possibly so that project spanned a move from the Newton Terrace Centre to the new space in Bath Street and that project was really kind of collecting stories from women and when I say women because we didn't have that focus on young women at that time, it was women 16 plus and we did work with women 16 to 88, I mean it was like a real diverse range of women but that project was really to kind of get together the information we had because there was lots of documents and there was kind of documents here and there was a box of things there and it was all a bit all over the place so we really wanted to create a project that brought everything together and actually gave women the opportunity to lead on that so we could support them with that, so I know they created a video, I know they created a leaflet around kind of the spaces that Glasgow YWCA had occupied and the history of it so talking about the international flag that started in Glasgow, so that was a space that was started for women who were new to Glasgow to come together and cook and share each other's food so they would rotate and they would share so one woman would cook one week and then if there was children there they could all play, so it was kind of like picking up the pieces of all of this incredible work and kind of putting it together in one project so that was really interesting, the women, they loved it and they were doing something very similar to what you were doing chatting to people, kind of gathering information visiting the libraries, they were pretty much investigators for two years, they were brilliant, it was so good it was a great project.

**Interviewer:** This class sounds really interesting.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** What was your favourite... Piece of information that you found from the project itself, was there anything that was really surprising?

**Interviewee:** The flat was really interesting to me because at that time I think I could totally see the relationship between that one flat that started where women who were new to Glasgow came together to eat, to share food, to share stories to share experiences, to make friends and I could totally see how we just created that in the Newton Terrace space but on a bigger scale just over three floors and in a townhouse not in a flat so I think that was really interesting to me and I think the one thing I really loved is when the women were talking about their experiences of being involved in it, they really, really enjoyed it and it was something so new to them and they'd done such a good job of pulling everything together so that was, that was something I really I wasn't surprised because I knew they'd do a great job but I really enjoyed seeing that for them they'd delivered an amazing project they really did.

**Interviewer:** Maybe a bit biased, we think that the history of the organisation is really important but what does it mean to you to be able to have those records of the past?

**Interviewee:** I think, for me I think it's recognising all of the incredible work that women have done whether that's women who've been involved in the movement whether that's been women who've worked for the organisation I think just to hold that and keep that and recognise that we exist a hundred years on because of the hard work of women and because of the tenacity of women and because of the willingness for women to work together to create spaces for other women so for me that's what I think is the most important thing but I'm not necessarily a student of history so I'm sure there's lots of different nuances in that but for me it's about just really recognising all the work that's gone into creating where we are today.

**Interviewer:** On that, previously on the break you mentioned that occasionally people who were previously involved get in touch what does that feel like, you know, the impact that the organisation has had on people?

**Interviewee:** It's lovely, I think, I think, yeah... It's one of the many things that I can say this is why we do what we do so when you get an email from somebody three years ago oh hi I just wanted to say hi this is what I'm doing now, how are you all we always get 'I miss you' or 'we miss you, it felt like a family' and I think that might have shifted to that kind of, not the family feeling but the movement, that collective act that is still there I think just knowing that that space for women is still dear to them five years down the line, ten years down the line fourteen years down the line, I think there's a little bit of, kind of, almost like self-satisfaction I was part of something, we did a good job we were there to support, that does feel nice I have to say.

**Interviewer:** That's very lovely.

**Interviewee:** It is, and it's lovely to know that their experience was so good that it's still there for them and it still brings up great memories, so, yeah, that's lovely, I do like that.

**Interviewer:** When people get in touch are there any other things they tend to mention the most or is there a certain direction you find that they've carried forward?

**Interviewee:** It's usually 'we miss you', 'we loved our time' 'it felt like family', but then we...And this is the really lovely bit this is what I'm doing now or I'm working as, I don't know... A pharmacist or, remember I was telling you about I always wanted to be a teacher I'm now a teacher or it might be updates on the family, so because there was a creche a lot of the children we saw growing up we would see them five days a week and then we'll get updates on the kids and how they're doing such and such is fifteen now or sixteen now and they're in college it's updates like about, kind of, the skills I've learned or this is what I've done with them or this is how my family is, so it's always, it's a mix of that personal stuff and the stuff is I'm now a lecturer or I'm now a dentist or I'm now an archaeologist, whatever it is, but there's always, whether it be an employment thing or whether it's more a personal thing or I'm doing so much better. There's always growth in that, that's lovely when you see that and you read that, it's great.

**Interviewer:** I guess maybe I should have asked this earlier, the volunteers that are working with YWCA are there many that have tended to stick with the organisation or what capacity have volunteers played a part in your role?

**Interviewee:** I mean, volunteers are instrumental to how our organisation can function, so, today is a perfect example of that but in terms of through my experience and my years of working with the organisation, yeah, volunteers will always stay engaged in some way so a lot of those emails that we get are from volunteers, like, just updating us and it's always good to see volunteers move on because you know that's part of their journey that's part of their growth and that's brilliant but they do tend to stay connected, I mean, our advisory collective, they're all volunteers they support our work, they are really instrumental in that our advisory panel in Glasgow develop sessions for us they tell us what we should be delivering for young women because they're young women so yeah, they're really important and our CEO was a volunteer, she also was part of our young women lead cohort, Heidi who is my colleague me, Heidi and Libby were the team that started with YWCA Glasgow, we've been here the longest, Heidi was a volunteer, she started as a volunteer so often volunteers end up in paid positions as part of the team. It's really heart-warming [laughing]. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Maybe now on a slightly different tone, I've got questions that are maybe slightly more exploratory of wider themes, the idea of being a feminist organisation. What do you think it means to be a feminist organisation?

**Interviewee:** For me, to be a feminist organisation is about being an intersectional feminist organisation and what that means to me is that we are supporting women in the way they need to be supported but also recognising that there are so many different layers to inequality, it's also about being feminist in our approach it's also about being feminist when we're developing policies, procedures, so yeah, it's something that I think it's got to underpin everything that we do.

**Interviewer:** And how is that... How to word this sorry ... When you were working with YWCA do you think that feminism was still underpinned as an important value? What relationship did the work have?

**Interviewee:** Honestly, I'm going to say no. I don't... That's interesting. I don't... I feel it was certainly very... I feel the team were very feminist, I feel the team were very intersectional however I don't feel that we had... In fact I'm saying I don't feel, I know, that we didn't have the infrastructure there to support that, yeah, so... Yeah.

**Interviewer:** It's just interesting because clearly things are continuing to change.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, it definitely, I don't feel it was there in terms of our policies in terms of our collective wellbeing in terms of how the organisation was structured, this is just my personal opinion but I don't feel it was there when we joined YWCA Scotland that's when it really started and that's when I really started to notice the difference and notice that, okay so we're not just talking about being feminist, I'm not just as a person, as a team member bringing my intersectional feminist values to my everyday work, we're underpinning it,

we're setting the framework so that for me was a really welcome change and a really welcome development, yeah.

**Interviewer:** This is maybe a broader question so take this as you will. So, what challenges did you or do you face within the organisation?

**Interviewee:** As in, sorry?

**Interviewer:** Either personally or what challenges do you think the organisation faces?

**Interviewee:** Okay, yeah, I mean, what's going on in the world now we're always facing something but I really feel right now and I used the term before I feel that for every step we're taking forward we're taking ten steps back and I think now the world doesn't feel like a very safe space. I think women's reproductive rights, they're up for question again, they should never be up for question and I think young women and women and girls are dealing with so much right now that really, I mean, this, this is gettin'... I feel it's getting worse in many ways and I feel it's getting a little bit more wobbly for young women and women so yeah.

**Interviewer:** It's a very open question, but then, going back to, you mentioned the YWCA felt much more focused on a specific area do you think the challenges the organisation has faced have changed?

**Interviewee:** I don't I think... I would like to say yes although our team is broader and our offering is broader because we've got our events and partnerships we've got our comms team, we've got our programmes team we've got our research and policy team so even though we offer more we're still very, very focused we're just focused on lots of different layers now so we know that in order to make real change we need to do it at a community level we need to do it at a decision making level... And what was the first part of the question I told you this would happen and I told you I'd forget half way through.

**Interviewer:** The challenges facing the organisation, before just with the scale you mentioned the YWCA, Glasgow was very focused on a very bounded within the community when you were working there do you think the challenges you faced within working in the community were different to the challenges you're facing now?

**Interviewee:** Yes and no, I think because, I think because it was quite a standalone service, I think often we could lose sight of the wider challenges that women were facing because we were very focused and actually in that space the majority of women we work with were from marginalised communities particularly the asylum seeking and refugee community, so I think a lot of the focus for that service was supporting them with their particular needs and obviously taking that intersectional approach. So, yeah I think it was, yeah it was probably a bit more focused whereas now because we are supporting women across Scotland we've really opened up what we do and we feel more connected I think that inevitably for me just widened that kind of, oh yeah, there are far more challenges. I hope that answers your question.

**Interviewer:** No, it does.

**Interviewee:** It makes sense in my mind.

**Interviewer:** It made sense to me.

**Interviewee:** [Laughing] thank you, good.

**Interviewer:** I've kind of, that's me gone through my list of questions, you've done a lot of work with the organisation are there any things that we've not talked about today that you'd like to mention or discuss.

**Interviewee:** Oh let me think. I think... I think what for me there has been a lot of change. and there has been a lot of movement even just like geographical change I think in terms of where we are now really for me feels extremely safe and focused and I think because we've had some really incredible women working with our organisation working and engaging with it, I think that's really supported us to be where we are now so yeah it's something, like, genuinely I feel so lucky to be able to go to work every day and work for the Young Women's Movement. It's something that gives me a lot of pride a lot of joy, a lot of happiness but yeah, I think it's just really important to recognise and for whoever is reading these materials or watching these videos and these interviews that there has been a whole lot of change, a lot of change and I think one that's been for the right reasons and it's been for the benefit of young women in the organisation but I think it's always important to remember through that change there's been women that have led that, there's been women who have supported that and there's been women, even when things were changing that have always held that safe, brave space for young women and people who engage with our services so I think that's something that I would like to quite keenly get across.

**Interviewer:** In light of that change on the other hand, are there some things that you miss about the old structure of the organisation or the YWCA Glasgow?

**Interviewee:** Oh, that is a really interesting question so yeah, wherever we've been there's always things that I miss but then there's always new exciting things and there's always new memories to create and there's always new achievements so yeah, what I do... Oh, the food that's what I miss, so we had a kitchen space and women could just use that some women would be making food for the children or heating up bottles but I think as well because we've always been a charity and I think that is also sometimes lost because people see what we do and they're like, oh my goodness, there's a young group of women in Parliament or there's a young group of women leading this, this piece of work, I think people often forget we're a charity as well, which we are and we require funding, but I think in that space the one thing I miss is, I think because women would come and do classes or whatever and it was all free to them obviously, as it should be, they would often feel that they had to, kind of, contribute and we'd be like, no you don't it's fine, you just being here is great, this is what we want, so they would often make food and honestly, I do miss the food. So you'd go in that kitchen and somebody would say I've brought in this and this is from my home country and this is a traditional meal that we would sit down and eat with family and then,

I've brought this, have one, have one so you're kind of like, right, I'll take one because somebody's made so much effort and they've really put all their love and thought and time and money into it and a lot of the women we were working with had very little, very little money, so you'd be so thankful but my goodness, I mean, I used to eat like a queen, every day, and it was like are you sure? Yes, please take that, so I miss the food and that sense of that sharing, and that was always such a lovely thing and just accepting something that somebody's really made with love and it was always lovely, so yeah, food, I miss the food [laughing].

**Interviewer:** Sounds like a dream honestly [laughing].

**Interviewee:** You have no idea how tasty some of this... And this is recipes that this was my grandma's recipe or my aunt taught me how to make this so you were getting that whole family love in a samosa or whatever and it was great, although I ended up, yeah, I was a lot heavier by the time I finished because I was just constantly eating [laughing] and it's just so, I miss the food and that sense of community, I do.

**Interviewer:** I get the sense that, was the building just open for people to pop in at all hours?

**Interviewee:** No, so it was kind of open, I want to say business hours, we did have late night openings because obviously to make sure that we could meet the needs of women, so we'd run some evening things, so for, you know, women who couldn't make it during the day whether it was work or, you know, college, or uni, whatever, but yeah, so that kind of changed when we moved to the centre, the Glasgow Centre in Deniston in the East End of Glasgow that was more kind of business hours as well yeah, but we tried our best to kind of, yeah, offer lots of different opportunities.

**Interviewer:** I don't mean to keep jumping topic but I just thought of a question. You mentioned there's a transition from just being a women's organisation to focus on young women I'd maybe ask a question about the elderly or the centre groups for older women I've no set question, I'm just a bit curious, really?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, so before we really honed down our direction and our strategic plan and obviously young women were involved in that as well and that's why we done that, the services that we'd offered kind of before were open to anybody, and all through this interview I've said young women and women and we're also talking about non-binary people as well and anyone who feels comfortable in that space, so yeah we had such a diverse age of women that we historically worked with, like literally from 16 to 88 and all ages in between so it was really interesting. So I think that just showed the appetite that women had for learning new things and for being together and for finding a space in a group of other women and a lot of that as I say in terms of the Newton Terrace space, the 3 Newton Terrace Space, the majority of women who came to that space were new to Glasgow so I think a lot of that was about connection for the women, not necessarily always about learning something that they can take forward, however, the impact of that was they usually did just by nature of being involved but I think a lot of it was about reducing isolation, a lot of it was about connecting with somebody from your home country

somebody who spoke the same language as you somebody who knew the same foods who knew the same music, that type of thing, so yeah it was really diverse in age ranges but that brought such an intergenerational approach to the work and the team was intergenerational as well so yeah it created a really lovely atmosphere and I think thinking about it now, because a lot of women used the space for connection I think that's where we used to get feedback about it feeling like a family, so it was almost like the building was there and the women created that family for themselves and that's just linked up in my brain now when you've asked that question, so thanks for asking that. So, yeah, I think that's why the feeling was so much about family and friendship than it was necessarily about a movement or collective action, so I think that's a big difference and I think that comes from the groups of women we work with in the age ranges for sure.

**Interviewer:** That's really interesting.

**Interviewer:** Do you have anything to add?

**Filmer:** I don't think so.

**Interviewer:** There's still time if you'd like to add anything else anything else you'd like to mention?

**Interviewee:** Oh my goodness, let me wrap my brain I don't know, is there anything that I've mentioned that you want me to expand on?

**Interviewer:** Maybe, I know we've been chatting on for quite a while.

**Interviewee:** That's ok, that's what I'm here for I'm happy to do that.

**Interviewer:** Maybe we should go back to the classes that you ran from the YMCA?

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** You mentioned a little bit about computer literacy what were the most popular classes would you say?

**Interviewee:** Oh, our ESOL classes were always really popular because obviously women are really wanting to, particularly women who are new to Glasgow are really wanting to integrate into the community and that was a really good way of doing it and learning a language that was new to them. We used to do cooking classes, so cooking classes were always really, really popular again, very food based and by the way, there was nothing that we could teach any other women about cooking because they were all absolutely amazing, so they were really popular and then we partnered with I think it was either it might have been Kelvin College or Glasgow Clyde College I'm trying to think, so we did like computer literacy, so there used to be a college course called ECDL and I think it was something random like European Computers Drivers Licence, is that right? I've just got the bronze up there, that's good, thank you. So that was always really popular because women were, needed to push up on their IT skills but what we always did, we always kind of embedded

that level of adult literacy and numeracy support within that, obviously taking into account that for many, many of the women who attended classes, English wasn't their first language, they could speak 10 other languages but English wasn't the first language so we were really mindful with how we delivered whether it be kind of formal education classes even social activities so food classes, anything to do with cooking anything to do with computer skills and anything to do with ESOL they were, I would say, the biggest draws but we would link up with local NHS groups and we would do kind of like health based stuff as well, yeah, stuff like that, kind of, just really responding to what women who were new to Glasgow were saying they needed things like sessions on how do you find out where your dentist is how do you appoint a doctor, things like that, I guess me as somebody who speaks English as a first language would take for granted that I can pick up a phone or I can find the information, so, things like that, those real kind of, I don't want to say soft skills because they weren't, they were really important skills to have but things like that that maybe you or I would take for granted they were always very popular and well attended sessions too.

**Interviewer:** Were there any sessions that maybe you wouldn't think that the service would run?

**Interviewee:** Say that again, I'm so sorry.

**Interviewer:** were there any sessions that would run that were maybe more surprising or you wouldn't necessarily expect or maybe more unique?

**Interviewee:** oh, hundreds so part of my role at the time was kind of responding to women in developing classes so we I was really, really lucky I know an incredible artist so we done some kind of art classes so we had like a real life artist do exhibits coming in and literally teaching the women how to draw faces, how to, you know, so that was great and we had, oh my goodness, knitting classes, I had to go away and I can knit but I had to really learn how to teach somebody how to knit because the women were like, we want to learn knitting or we had drama classes so the social group put on a play once which was amazing, so we got in touch with a local voiceover artist and an actor, Leanne her name was, she was so good, she was brilliant so they literally put on a class oh, I've forgotten this, I wish I'd remembered so one of the most popular classes we ever had was a line dancing class. Yes, now, remember me saying we had very, very little budget? So my mother-in-law is I mean she loves line dancing she goes line dancing every week so I was like, would you like to come and teach line dancing classes and she was like, totally and I was like, we have no money she was like, that doesn't matter at all, I've got a bus pass, I'm fine so Vicky and her friend Margaret they taught line dancing classes and that was an absolute hoot it was incredible it was funny, I mean at one point my manager at the time, Carol came down three flights of stairs and she was like what is happening here, all we can hear is laughing and yee-hawing and it was just great. So, yeah, that was another class that will go down in Glasgow YWCA history as being probably the loudest class that we've ever had, and then, I do remember the children coming up from creche so the creche team would bring the kids up and the kids were in and the music was still going and then the next thing you know we've got a line of mums and kids, kind of, grape vining and heel kicking so it was really good fun, that was great.

**Interviewer:** It sounds like my perfect evening.

**Interviewee:** It was so good, it was such good fun and we actually then took that class out into the community so we've done some work with Phoenix Futures which are a rehabilitation centre so we went and delivered because I was just talking to one of the team members there who we've been working with, going in and delivering one of our funding programmes and I was telling them about it and they were like, we would love to do that so we were like ok, we can make that happen, so yeah [laughing]. My mother-in-law and a friend were extremely popular [laughing] in our space but you have to be very creative so those skills of creativity, how can we make this happen for women if this is what they want and we were pretty good at that, I have to say.

**Interviewer:** Do you know if there are any pictures or archival material out there?

**Interviewee:** I would imagine there will be and I would imagine that would have been collated as part of the heritage programme around about 2013-15. I would think there would be photographs because we were really good at kind of, collecting that evidence for impact so we could measure our impact and that photographic evidence is part of it where they are, I would not know but I know there are photographs and I know they exist because I certainly took quite a lot of them where they are now, I'm not too sure maybe in the archives.

**Interviewer:** That would be something to keep an eye out for. That might be my list of questions.

**Interviewee:** Okay, perfect, thank you so much.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, it's been wonderful talking to you.

**Interviewee:** Thank you, I really appreciate it It's brought back lots of nice memories and it also gives me that, it just makes me so happy that we're doing what we're doing and we're still continuing to do it but I really appreciated it, thank you so much too, it's been great.