Emma Crawshaw 05.04.25

Interviewer: So my name is Iona Rogers and I'm interviewing Emma Crawshaw for the Young Women's Movement's Young Women Remember project. So to begin Emma, can you please tell me your full name and where you're from and what your previous role was with YWCA Scotland?

Interviewee: Thanks, Iona, So my name is Emma Crawshaw. I'm originally from Zimbabwe via Merseyside and then Edinburgh and my original role at the Young Women's Movement when it was the YWCA was as a volunteer and then as a clerical worker and then as a volunteer development worker and then as the Roundabout Centre manager.

Interviewer: Thank you. Can I ask how old you are now and where you were born?

Interviewee: I was born in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and I am now 50... I can't remember if I'm 53 or 52, sorry [laughing]. [Pause]. I think I'm going to be 53 in October so yeah, I'm 52, sorry. You think I'd have worked it out by now [laughing].

Interviewer: And just to confirm that again, whereabouts is it that you've lived over time?

Interviewee: Okay, so I've lived in Edinburgh since 1991. Before that I lived in Cambridge for two years and then Merseyside for probably about 15 years and then before that Devon and Zimbabwe.

Interviewer: So you've said you're Chief Executive now of Crew Scotland, um, what jobs have you had in the past?

Interviewee: Previous to this job I was a smoking prevention development worker with Fast Forward which sounds terribly forbidding but I didn't go around in a hat telling everyone not to smoke. I went to lots of community organisations and gave them advice about how to protect themselves from second-hand smoke, how to protect children from second-hand smoke and how to get help with addressing smoking rather than you know judging people or telling them off or anything like that. And prior to that I was at the Young Women's Movement which was then the YWCA as the Roundabout Centre manager. So I've always worked in community education apart from sort of summer jobs in hospitality.

Interviewer: So, good to know a wee bit more about you. We're gonna have a wee think about your involvement specifically in Young Women's Movement or the YWCA. So in your various capacities with YWCA, what year did you originally join the organisation?

Interviewee: 1997.

Interviewer: 1997, do you remember what month in 1997?

Interviewee: Oh, that's a good question. I think it would have been about the autumn time. I couldn't be sure but I think it was.

Interviewer: And how old were you when you joined?

Interviewee: I would have been 20... Actually maybe it was 1996. I'm sorry I can't remember exactly but I would have been 24, 25. Just... I think the definition at the time in the movement was 25 to be a young woman.

Interviewer: Um, how was it that you found out and came across the organisation?

Interviewee: Um, I think I was, at the time, I was doing a training for work course about...My interest was community education and we had to do a placement. This was through the YMCA and they suggested the intercultural creche at the Roundabout Centre which I thought sounded absolutely brilliant and so I started volunteering there three times a week.

Interviewer: And how was it that you came across the YMCA that then fed into that kind of first contact?

Interviewee: I think it was through the job centre [laughing] when I was signing on, um, but no I mean it was this amazing course that you could do to help you gain experience and get into community work. I don't know if it's still going but it was a real opportunity for me.

Interviewer: And at that time was community development something that you were looking for directly or were you much more kind of open-minded to what initiatives and organisations you would be kind of working with?

Interviewee: At the time I actually wanted to teach English as a second or other language and so I thought that, you know, working in a creche with lots and lots of people who spoke lots of different languages would help me understand how to communicate in a way that's, um, inclusive. So I wasn't really thinking at that point specifically about community work it was much more about the idea of teaching but actually as…The more I did in the community, the more I felt that actually that was a more direct way to actually stand alongside people and to listen to them and to understand how justice is not evenly distributed and how power is not evenly distributed and to think about what are the ways that you can you know use your capital use your privileges to you know create opportunities to create space with people to navigate and negotiate the barriers that people face day to day.

Interviewer: So one of the kind of projects and initiatives that you've already referenced thinking about that community development and thinking about that cohesion and uplifting of community is the intercultural summer school, the intercultural creche? Can you tell us a bit more about that?

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. So, the intercultural creche was something really, really central to the Roundabout Centre and the idea was to have very, very low cost child care and to have a culturally competent environment for people from all sorts of different communities many of whom you know may have been in Edinburgh for generations and generations, many of whom may have recently arrived in Edinburgh, and to offer them an environment where we had a really good understanding of anti-racism that was a really big

component we didn't have that in the title, I remember. So, it was also something that we felt that offering young women subsidised child care to us that was a really good way to help young women to access study, respite or work which was something that was very difficult for them to access otherwise. The intercultural anti-racist summer school was something that the Roundabout Centre also offered and I think the idea of that again was this idea of subsidised child care on the one hand which is something that, the Y, the movement I think had really established in America but also to have that educational aspect of anti-racism as well to have that as the foundation of the summer school, so, you know young people who perhaps weren't having the best experience in schools were having a safe environment where, you know, we talked openly about racism we had strategies to deal with it but also lots of young people came in as volunteers to educate themselves around anti-racism as well as having a safe space to come to where you know they knew that you know their rights and dignity would be respected so that was I think in a nutshell, so many women worked so hard to bring both of these projects into being. I think the Roundabout Centre itself started because Claude Barber who's a community worker from Chicago noticed a group of women at the bus stop, um, who I think were South Asian women and they met at the bus stop every day for company to get out of the rain and this bus stop was actually outside the building that became the Roundabout Centre so I can only imagine [laughing] the amount of work that these women together with Claude must have put into you know contacting the YWCA at the time and talking about the needs of women who you know didn't necessarily speak English as a first language who were experiencing racism and also experiencing you know isolation in a lot of cases.

Interviewer: It's really interesting to hear that bit of background before those projects came to be and that full circle moment of it actually, the Roundabout Centre, being just where that bus stop was where things came to be. Could you, just for a bit more context, where is it that the Roundabout Centre was located and is it still in the same place?

Interviewee: I'm afraid not, no. It was a real shame. It was a wonderful, wonderful project. The actual bus stop is the first one on Elm Row on the left-hand side, so it's a proper interchange bus stop, so lots of people meet there but Gayfield Place is the really quite fancy tenement, sandstone tenement behind the bus stop and so the YWCA managed to purchase the three basement floors and then an upper floor to run as a women's centre, which was absolutely incredible. So it used to have a cafe, it had the creche. For the summer school, we went down the road and used Drummond High School, which is a local community high school and then that building was sold in 19... actually, probably 2013, maybe, unfortunately. But, yeah, I mean, I think hundreds of hundreds of women would have accessed that space when it started, which would have been, I think, late 60s, early 70s, I think. So it ran for a long, long time. Yeah, so it was an amazing project, amazing project, but it's now been converted into luxury flats [laughing] like so much in Edinburgh, unfortunately.

Interviewer: And just to double-check there, you said Elm Road?

Interviewee: Elm Row, sorry, E-L-M-R-O-W.

Interviewer: Oh, great, no, thank you for that.

Interviewee: That's okay.

Interviewer: So, yeah, thinking about that physical space, could you give a description of what it looked like inside and what services were provided across each, kind of, part of the building?

Interviewee: Wow, yes, okay, so the basement itself, we used to have the creche, a big room that was brightly coloured, lots of beautiful toys, but also making sure these toys were culturally competent and reflected lots of different cultures. We had some office spaces as well, and then we had two big meeting rooms where we would have all sorts of people coming in. We used to have some 12-step fellowship groups coming in to rent the room, and that provided us with income. Laterally, we also had lots and lots of women's groups and had our own programme for women, but we also had other organisations coming in. We had survivors' organisations coming in every week to cook a meal together. We also had a community development student who created a Friday lunch group where we would look at healthy eating on a budget. Everyone would get a free lunch and we'd cook together and people would bring recipes from all over the world. There were education courses for women, helping them get back into work if that's what they wanted to do. We had educational training courses for the volunteers. One thing we used to do, actually, as part of the Young Women's Movement as it was then, we had our own child protection training in the late 90s, early noughties. I remember my friend was doing teacher training at the time and she had absolutely no child protection training at all, which just seems bizarre to even think about it. So she and her friends used to come to the child protection training because the Y was already ahead with that, and actually, to be honest, most charities were but in the education system, unfortunately, that was something that wasn't even discussed at that time, which is quite unsettling but it was great that people came in to the centre. There were years and years of work before that where different community courses were created with women and co-produced with women. The centre, the two big public meeting rooms in the centre in the summer were also used for volunteers from all over the world through a volunteering scheme. I think it's called... Is it the International Volunteer Fund? I can't remember exactly, but ten volunteers every year would come and stay in the centre over the summer and work on intercultural summer school. So you would have ten volunteers from all over the world who'd never met each other learning to live together in really quite cramped conditions [laughing] and then sometimes they would do a cooking tournament, so one night would be a German night, one night would be an Armenian night and then a few times they got asked to come in and judge [laughing] which was the best night out of a week of these beautiful meals. They were just amazing, and I'm still in touch with some of them, which is lovely and it was mostly young women, but we did also have young men coming over as well, which was just... It was just fantastic. The upstairs of the building was much grander and had sort of cornicing and huge big meeting rooms, and obviously that was also a place where lots and lots of women's groups had taken place, women's health groups, community development groups, community education groups, and also the Home Tutors Scheme. That's something that was set up so that volunteers could get trained up to teach English in a really informal way with people who didn't have a lot of English in their own homes, because it was recognised that actually coming out of the home to come to a class

was something that a lot of women weren't actually able to do for all sorts of different reasons, whether it was caring responsibilities or sort of cultural barriers within the community, or just the fact that some women didn't really feel they had enough English to navigate public transport and didn't really feel safe going out. So all those, all those classes happened initially upstairs. We got to a point before I was actually part of the movement then where that building, I think the maintenance on it, because it was a listed building, was too expensive for the movement to be able to sustain. So that part of the building, the upstairs, was sold to the Christadelphian Church, who were really, really amazing neighbours, and then we just kept the basement floor and the two sub-basement floors. The sub-basement floor was used as a sort of archive and store, but also we rented it out to the Beltane Fire Society. So we had all sorts of weird and wonderful costumes and amazing people, absolutely lovely people who would come in, and sometimes they would do sort of drumming practises upstairs and we had African djembe drumming groups, we had a Punjabi music group, and then we also had a group of young wives, I think they'd been young wives in the 60s, and they'd met together every week since then, even in the sort of late 90s, early 00s, they still came together every week to have speakers and to get together. So there was a huge, a huge variety of different activities. There was a cafe as well, that was before my time. Yeah, so many things. I've probably missed lots and lots of them out, but I'm sure you'll be speaking to other people who were involved in the Roundabout Centre and I think anti-racist training was also something we did for all our volunteers, and we did invite people who were volunteering for other organisations, and my friend who was doing teacher training used to come along to that as well, which I think she really, really enjoyed.

Interviewer: That's really amazing to hear, that very vibrant picture of what was happening. That leads us on, I think, quite well to our next couple of questions. There seems to be themes of community cohesion, cross-agency, collaboration, peer facilitation as well. Was that something that was, as part of the wider YWCA, was that something that was very much a priority on the agenda at the time?

Interviewee: That's a really good question, actually. I think when I came to the Roundabout Centre, I think it was very much in its own world, I think and I think it was called the Roundabout Centre. It wasn't called the YWCA Roundabout Centre, it was called the Roundabout Centre, because we were near the big roundabout at the top of Leith Walk. I think the idea was to help people find it. So, I think it really did have a really strong culture in and of itself, but then we would also connect to the wider movement at annual conferences, and there was a project at Lochend as well, but that worked with quite a different client group and had quite a different focus. So I think that probably was happening across the movement, but my early knowledge was very much about how things were done at the Roundabout Centre. I think the Roundabout Centre had a worker called Susan England, who was a real pioneer in a lot of respects, and I think she actually ended up writing the anti-racist policy for the whole of the... At that time, there was only the YWCA across the UK. It was before Scotland became an independent YWCA and then the Young Women's Movement. So that, I mean, was quite a big thing, and it showed that the movement was really open to that, which is really, really good to hear, because I think it was quite ahead of its time in some respects, compared to perhaps other organisations that might have not had the same focus.

Interviewer: So there was that somewhat, to some extent, that wider focus, but felt maybe a bit more local, exactly with what you're...

Interviewee: Yeah, and I think that probably just reflects my experience and knowledge, because at that point I was a volunteer, so I was only really working on projects I wasn't quite so aware of, the, the wider movement, but I did start getting more into things like annual conferences in Scotland and in GB. So as time went on, obviously, I was able to kind of appreciate that kind of co-working and co-design and collaboration across the movement a lot better.

Interviewer: And on that local level, thinking about Edinburgh, or maybe the Lothians more generally, how typical was the organisation's approach to community development and the projects you were doing? Was that something that was quite typical of the city at the time and part of a wider conversation?

Interviewee: To some extent. I think the Roundabout Centre was seen as quite unique, because unfortunately, there was a black community development project in Pilton, but that was geographically very separate. It was quite a long way away. There was multicultural family-based work that had much more of a social work focus, whereas the Roundabout Centre was very much more about community development and, you know, obviously acknowledging hierarchies and acknowledging differences in power, but also trying to sort of have a bit of critical thinking about them as well. So yeah, it's difficult to know how typical it was really, again, because I was only involved in part of it, whereas the actual networking and collaboration that happened... Actually, one of the things that the centre manager was involved in when I first started there was a working party to have Edinburgh celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday. So that evidences, doesn't it, quite a lot of collaboration and, you know, commitment to the idea of anti-racism. So yeah, I hope very much it was. I hope very much it was, definitely.

Interviewer: Thank you for that. So you were involved at the Roundabout Centre. Was that as a staff member as well, as a volunteer?

Interviewee: Eventually, yes. I think I was there for... You know, after volunteering in the creche, I got asked if I would voluntarily do volunteer recruitment for the summer school and be on the summer school myself, which I enjoyed tremendously and then a job came up, and I went for it because I was studying community education at the time. So I got this clerical job and sort of, you know, would do a morning at the Roundabout Centre, then run off to Moray House and, you know, do some lectures and then come back and things like that, which was actually really good and then I started working in other places, doing placements as part of my course, and then a full-time job came up as a volunteer development worker and then as the project manager.

Interviewer: And how long were you in each of those roles, as a volunteer and as a staff member?

Interviewee: So I think I was volunteering for... 18 months, and then I was working as a clerical officer for six months, and then I was working as a volunteer development worker

for a year, and then I went on maternity leave and then I came back after 18 weeks, because that's what [laughing] maternity leave was in those days, and that was actually quite generous compared to what my friends in the finance industry who had sort of two weeks and things like that, and then I came back, and then I think I was centre manager for about almost 10 years, which was quite a long time to be in any one job, I suppose, but I just loved what the Roundabout Centre did and also I think that's when the movement became its own Scottish movement, which was really exciting as well, and also I think I got the opportunity to work with other centre managers across Scotland, and also work with YWCA GB as well.

Interviewer: And you kind of said earlier about maybe your involvement more widely with the organisation as a volunteer was maybe not quite the same as maybe being a staff member. How did your involvement with the organisation as part of your life, as that part of your life, what impact did that have, and how did that change over time as you became a member of staff?

Interviewee: Oh, gosh. I mean, I think it was really, really energising, really energising, and I think just a really safe space to think about things like privilege, and, you know, how you acknowledge that, and then how... I think the big idea of the Y was about being of service in a way that was not patronising, and, you know, not damaging. So that was a really, really big turning point in my life. I think I'd kind of finished uni, wasn't really sure what I wanted to do. I was kind of partying quite a lot. Not in a damaging way, I don't think. I think I really actually quite enjoyed that but it was a focus that I wasn't necessarily thinking was going to be so big in my life, but did become a really big part of it and I'm really, really thankful that I had the opportunity to work with so many amazing people.

Interviewer: Speaking of the people, what were your relationships like with the other people there, be they staff members or colleagues? And service users as well, of course. Can you describe your relationships that you had at the time?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, it was just a really, really supportive place to come into. People really appreciated the fact that we volunteered. We were really encouraged to deepen our knowledge, make the most of all the opportunities in the wider centre, and then the Scottish movement and the GB movement as well. I think our relationship with people who access services was really, really important as well because obviously, if you're in a creche you're looking after somebody's child. They want to check you out. They want to make sure that you're genuine, that you're going to look after their child, you're going to respect the child. So that was really, really lovely to meet people and when I had my own child and she came to the creche it was really nice for her to have that environment to go into. I didn't want her to grow up in a monocultural environment because that hadn't been my experience and I didn't want that for her either. So that was really, really lovely. Obviously, when you're in the position of being a professional, you have to maintain some boundaries because, you know, you can't be completely available 24 hours a day but I think people were really, really respectful of that. So yeah, it was just absolutely incredible. It really was. I think, obviously, we did get insights into quite how oppressive our society in Scotland could be towards women in particular, but towards people genuinely who were not perceived as white. I think that is something that I had a sort of theoretical idea of. Obviously, having

been born in Zimbabwe, I was aware of the terrible, terrible things that had been done there by white people who'd basically stolen the country and named it after the person who'd done that, which is just... It's difficult to believe that that actually happened but yeah, I think sometimes mothers in the creche or young women volunteers would confide in us about an experience that they'd had. For example, one mother who had a child who was mixed race had got onto the bus and an old man had spat at them and said, that's not your baby. It's hard to understand how shocking and painful and threatening that must have felt for that mum but then it was also recognising that being able to talk to somebody about that and then to talk about this is what you can do if somebody racially abuses you but also, you know, first of all, oh my god, are you okay? Would you like a cup of tea? That side of things as well. It was really, really eye-opening as well.

Interviewer: It is eye opening. Thank you for sharing that. In terms of thinking a little bit more about your direct team members. Do you remember these people? What were they like?

Interviewee: Yes. [Laughing]. That was actually one who was just phoning [laughing]. That was somebody who used to coordinate the creche. Amazing, amazing young woman. Came in at a really young age actually and ran the creche brilliantly. Had all the childcare qualifications. Had left school to do childcare because that's what she wanted to do and did a fantastic job. So yeah, no, fantastic people. Fantastic people. I am still in touch with quite a few of them as well. When I became a centre manager we used to do quarterly meetings when we were all still working for the Y in Perth. We'd go to the George Hotel and when, unfortunately, our roles were made redundant [laughing] we still used to do those meetings at the hotel, the George Hotel in Perth. So that was really nice and then volunteers from the summer school, I still write to some of them that we worked together with. The summer school went from sort of creche aged children right up to the senior girls group which was a 13 to 16 year old group for girls only because one of the really central ideas in the movement was about women only space which I think is really, really important still and in that group the girls had just a little bit more freedom than the other age groups obviously because they were older, they got to plan their own activities, they would get a budget to use that with and so I worked with a volunteer from Norway and another volunteer from Edinburgh and yeah, we're still in touch. I mean, social media makes that a lot easier but before social media was readily available we would write to each other which was lovely. So yeah, it was a really precious thing and you know, there are some kids today who've actually gone on to do really well who used to come to the summer school so it's really great to see them doing well [unclear due to laughing] is one of them. I remember the energy, [laughing] just really, really fantastic.

Interviewer: It seems like it was a really enjoyable opening and just really fruitful experience for you.

Interviewee: Oh, it was and I really hope it was for all the kids as well. I remember, you know, we had to fundraise for it every year and we'd go to children in need but who really, really supported it. They really got what it was about. One of them said, wouldn't it be great if we did a longitudinal study? And we looked at what are the experiences of these kids 10, 20 years later, you know, and how much of that would they attribute to having this

experience in the summer because some of them were in schools that were really supportive and inclusive and others perhaps might have been the only child with their cultural background in the school and sometimes, again, that wasn't necessarily always a bad experience but sometimes it was, particularly if they lived somewhere that maybe wasn't in the city. We did have people who would come from East Lothian, West Lothian, because this was the only space where there was anti-racist intercultural childcare. We did have one family who actually walked from Musselburgh every day, which, I mean, it's awful that they didn't have the money to get to the summer school. They were referred by social work but for some reason money wasn't available but they walked from Musselburgh every day to Drummond High School, which is quite a commitment, quite a commitment and, you know, probably great for their health but again, they shouldn't really have had to do that. So, yeah. We had Rise Kagona from the Bhundu Boys who were, I mean, they'd been a huge band and then he came to live in Edinburgh so he came on time, which was a really big thing. Sorry?

Interviewer: When did he come?

Interviewee: He, oh, goodness. I think that was early 2000s, early 2000s and I was just, my family were all like, oh my god, you know, my family lived all over the world but they were like, oh my god, we need to come to Edinburgh and I was like, no, you can't come, this is the summer school kids. [laughing] but no, I mean, he came, he played for free, he was just lovely. So, yeah. It was wonderful.

Interviewer: Amazing. No, thank you for that. Again, lots of really great things to kind of recall there. Could you maybe describe what your favourite memory was from the time you were in the organisation?

Interviewer: Ah, yes. Oh, right, okay, I've got tissues.

Interviewee: Okay. So, there were two girls from Iraq which, obviously, they were refugees from Iraq because their parents were doctors but they were not part of Saddam Hussein's sort of party or circle of influence. They were denied medical treatment for their son who died of leukaemia because of not being part of that circle of influence in Iraq, which is just awful. So, they left the country on that basis and also because of persecution their dad was facing. Obviously, he was a surgeon, he wasn't able to work here because of the ridiculous rules we have about refugees. I'm so sorry. [Interviewee upset] Anyway, so, part of what we did at summer school was trips to the countryside because what we recognised was, you know, the cost of public transport, the cultural norming of wild space in the countryside is very white. It's quite inaccessible for a lot of people who don't happen to have white skin. It can feel very intimidating. So, we would book coaches and take 100 kids and volunteers off to the countryside. My favourite trip was always going to the beach at Belhaven. So, there was a park that the kids would play in for half the day and then we would walk across this huge path to the beach and I remember the two girls getting to the top of a hill before we got to the beach and we had explained to them and we'd sent them a risk assessment to their parents and told them what to bring, but they got to the top of the hill and they saw the beach and the sea and they just said, what's that? Because Iraq is a landlocked country apart from, you know, lakes and marshes. What is that? And I was like, it's the sea! It's a

body of water, this is sand, you know, and you can go in up to your knees, don't go any further up to your knees, I'll be in the water, I'll make sure you don't go any further than up to your knees and we've got water pistols and you can have a water fight if it's okay because we've got towels. I just couldn't believe that they'd never seen the sea and it was so great to see that they got the opportunity to do it and they sort of looked at each other for a minute and then these two girls, they just ran into the sea and then we actually had to coax them out at the end of the day because they were having such a good time. Sorry! So yeah, but I think they really enjoyed it. My friend who was volunteering in their group at the time has kept a thank you card they sent to her for being their volunteer on the summer school. Yeah, they were just incredible people, they've been through so much suffering but they just, yeah, they just made the most of the opportunity. They came to Edinburgh, they built a completely new life for themselves which was incredible. It was such a privilege to be part of that. Sorry, I'm sorry for getting so emotional a bit, that really is one of the most incredible things that I saw happen and it was just, yeah, it was a real privilege to be part of that project.

Interviewer: That's okay, that's really wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing that. Do you want to take a wee break?

Interviewee: Yeah, maybe, sorry.

Interviewer: Once again, thank you so much for sharing that experience, that was really great to hear. It does seem very indicative about, you know, that, again, that kind of community cohesion and thinking about kind of impact and the opportunities that you maybe gained from it. So thinking a little bit about you and what you gained from the organisation through the kind of experiences, could you describe, you know, a little bit on that and how that kind of impacted your life outside of the movement at the time?

Interviewee: Wow. Yeah, I mean, there's absolutely no way I would be able to do the job that I do now without the Young Women's Movement, absolutely, because there was just so many opportunities available to us as volunteers, you know, we didn't just come and volunteer, we would volunteer and then, do you want to get involved in this? Have you thought about this? Someone actually created a course about play for the volunteers in the creche so that we could study in-depth theories about play that you otherwise wouldn't really get to study without going to university at great expense. It was cheaper in those days, but still, it was still quite prohibitive. So, yeah, absolutely, and I think just the confidence that it gives you when you get to network across Edinburgh, across Scotland, and across an international Young Women's Movement as well, was just amazing. I remember Musimbi Kanyoro who is the world president, coming to Edinburgh and it was a huge thing, but obviously, as young volunteers, we were encouraged to meet her and talk to her and learn from her examples, so I think it just was so empowering. I never really experienced a lot of sexism in my working life, I think, because I started in the Young Women's Movement. It just... I'm an extremely privileged person, I'm a middle-class white woman, I've been lucky enough to have a really, really powerful education, not just at school and uni, but also in the Young Women's Movement. So, it was, yeah, I don't think there's any way I could do this job without the learning and the experience that I was lucky enough to have in the movement, but also the solidarity from across the movement as well, when things were really difficult,

you know, the other volunteers would support each other, the other staff members would support each other, so that was incredible.

Interviewer: We've obviously spoken about a lot of the positive outcomes, a lot of the really fantastic programmes that you were part of running and contributing to. I just want to pick a wee bit out of something you said there around, kind of, hardships. What kind of challenges did you face at the time as part of the organisation, as part of the Roundabout Centre?

Interviewee: Gosh. I think when we had new leadership at what was then the Young Women's Movement and we were told we had to come under the YWCA banner, I think that was quite a difficult one [laughing] because I think the Roundabout Centre did have, it's own identity and it's not that we weren't thankful to be part of the movement, it's just that I think the rest of the movement and us had a different identity and so that was a challenge. You know, obviously, in the end, the fact that we became closer to the other centres and the other managers was ultimately really positive, but yeah, I think at the time that was tricky. It was tricky because any kind of partnership involves some letting go of people, some climbing down, some changing perspectives, so that's just human beings, it can be a difficult process. We also lost quite a bit of independence when that happened, so that was really difficult as well and, to be honest, there were some decisions made that we didn't agree with as well. I think one of the difficult things was that we had a really, really strong membership and when things did get difficult financially, some decisions were made without consulting them or our local advisory committee, and ultimately ended up being decisions which led to the Roundabout Centre closing, so that was really difficult, really difficult. We had a board, I think, who perhaps didn't necessarily understand the benefits of what we did. We were told by the Chief Executive at the time that, even though we had more volunteers, doing, more young women volunteers than the rest of the centres in Scotland, doing more hours than all the young women volunteers in the rest of Scotland, we were told that providing subsidised childcare didn't empower women and young girls, which I just didn't agree with [laughing]. So, yeah, that was difficult, that was really difficult, so I think it was a shame, I think it was a shame, but I'm also, obviously, having been on a board myself, I understand the responsibility that comes with that, the financial responsibility, and the fact that, without money, it's very difficult to support all of these wonderful things that I was able to benefit from, so, yeah and I think the kind of general direction of travel from 2008 onwards has been the constant erosion of voluntary sector services, which everybody has been affected by. I think the difficulty with that is that we are here as a result of system failure, we're here because there are gaps in the system, the system itself is really struggling, and we provide services that help people who can't access other services. It used to be, I think, that a lot of services like that would get mainstreamed if they were proven to be successful, and that has really stopped now. So that general direction of travel that is where that particularly difficult time came from has continued. At the moment we're trying to challenge 7% cuts that have been imposed on third sector drug treatment and support services at a time when access to statutory services is lower than it's ever been, demand for our services is higher than it has ever been, and we have the public context of a drug-related death public health emergency, so, yeah, it's a difficult, difficult time for the voluntary sector and that doesn't mean that people won't do amazing things collaboratively together in communities, but also having some infrastructure, having some paid workers can really

support that, as long as it doesn't then become another system in itself. But I'm you’re your very, very well aware of that.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think when you were talking about how the projects that you were working on and the values that the Roundabout Centre had was maybe, I mean, you can correct me, are you saying that that maybe didn't align completely with the YWCA as you kind of merged into the wider organisation?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think there were differences there. I mean, inevitably, any two kind of entities or more coming together, there will be some sort of subtle differences that might seem really subtle to one party and then seem really, really important and really obvious to another party, so it's about reaching and understanding. I think there was also quite a different management and leadership style, to be completely honest, that was less democratic and inclusive at the time, which was isolated, I think, but it wasn't easy to work with that because it was so different from how we'd worked before.

Interviewer: And even with those kind of challenges in mind, to what extent were you able to, as the Roundabout Centre, you know, maybe have your say or come to that compromise, the meet in the middle, as you were saying?

Interviewee: I remember using that statistic about women's volunteering and I think that gave us a state of execution, so that felt good, but after the person I'd made that point to at an AGM left, I think things changed quite quickly after that and it kind of felt at one point, at a very difficult point financially, that that wasn't taken into consideration, which was a shame, but that was a very long time ago.

Interviewer: And you had said when you were talking to us there that you were on the board, was that the board?

Interviewee: That was outside the YWCA, sorry, I mean the Young Women's Movement. That was, I was on the board at Edinburgh-Lothian's Racial Equality Council and then Evaluation Support Scotland, so that was, again, opportunities I don't think I would have ever had the confidence to take up had I not had an insight from the Young Women's Movement.

Interviewer: And did those board positions coincide with your time at the Roundabout Centre?

Interviewee: Yes, that's right, yes they did, yes and then when I came to Crew, I remember them saying, you're going to be far too busy here to do anything outside of work, because I was also volunteering with the Scouts, and so I had to kind of let those go but yeah, there's plenty to do but no, it was a real privilege to be able to contribute to those boards, I think, and just understand how different organisations work, and what are the commonalities across organisations, how do you manage your own organisation financially, but also what are the particular, sort of, cultures and values that drive organisations as well.

Interviewer: Kind of following on from that, could you maybe identify just one or two of the similarities and differences?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I suppose similarities would be things like annual accounts, balancing the books, trying to sustain the core services that are well needed, and there's good evidence that they work, with the pressure from funders to come up with something very new and very different, and how far can you kind of represent something that you know is valuable and needed as a new piece of work, and maintain your integrity. That's a really difficult one. I actually personally think it's good to not do that, it's good to not follow the money if you can, but there's less and less money to follow [laughing]. I think, yeah, our success rate with funding applications used to be one in three, and it's now more like one in ten, just because of the intense competition for funding. So that was, that was, you know, very little difference across organisations there. Obviously some organisations had much more secure funding. At the Y our funding was mostly local authorities and trusts and foundations, whereas LREC and Evaluation and Support Scotland had either Scottish Government and lots of local authority funding, or both. So they had much, much more security to go forward with, so that was another interesting difference. I'm just trying to think what other differences there might have been. Obviously at the Y the boards were all women as well, and they were also quite diverse at the Roundabout Centre, whereas at the other organisations they were mostly men. So that was an interesting, interesting difference. So yeah, I think those were the main differences, really. Can I just quickly check my phone?

Interviewer: So yeah, thank you again for sharing those details on the kind of merger of the Round about Centre into the YWCA. You had mentioned a little bit earlier around conferences in Scotland and the UK. It would be great to hear a bit more about your experience at the conferences.

Interviewee: Yeah, fantastic, yes, thank you. So I remember going to one at Durham, Durham University and yeah, just being asked to facilitate all sorts of groups with people that I'd never met.[Laughing]. They worked really well, people were really receptive. We were talking about violence against women and initiatives to address violence against women. One of which was a women's self-defence group that our volunteers had started at the Roundabout Centre but also learning about what everybody in the centres in England was doing. Which was really, at that time, it was really quite varied and also having more time, I guess, with other volunteers from Scotland who were involved in the wider movement, and sort of hearing about their experiences as well. So learning about the history of the movement as well, I think, there was one woman that we heard about, I'm afraid I've forgotten her name but during the war, she got all the archives from the Young Women's Movement into a truck and drove them to Switzerland because they were worried about bombs falling on the building where they were kept and them being lost forever. So yeah, it was really stunning to hear about somebody who, you know, had the initiative and the courage to do something so dangerous. When actually preservation of life was really a priority for a lot of people, quite understandably at the time but the, the , you know, the kind of, respect for the movement and the work that people had done. The fact that somebody had given their time to protect that was incredible. Yeah, it was really, really fantastic, that particular one. Also, I think there was a lot of modelling of ways of being that you wouldn't necessarily see at any conference and because that was the first kind of conference I'd ever been to, I kind of expect that at conferences now. I sometimes get a bit

disappointed if you don't have stuff about safe spaces, about who to speak to if you have a bit of a wobble because some people were maybe away from home for the first time if they were younger people, or there were people who'd come out of a really difficult situation. People in recovery. So there was provision for all of that. There was somebody who would be like, in the middle of the night, if you've had a bad dream, please don't come and wake me up but if you're in crisis, come and knock on my door. One person would allocate themselves to do that. So things that I kind of took for granted as a sort of foundation of how you do things. I think that was a really good experience there, you know. So that was powerful, and then I think in Scotland, the coming together to meet the other centres at conferences and having volunteers come with you and meet other volunteers from other centres. That was absolutely incredible, and one year there was a project about taking a delegation to Kenya for the World Wide YWCA Summit. I think it was a summit, and so I wasn't actually part of that because I had a very young child at the time but when all the Scottish centres got together and young women volunteers got together who kind of made it through the process to go to Kenya. That was incredible to see those girls growing in confidence and the scope of what they did after they came back from the conference. They went to the conference quite shy. They came back, they were bursting with ideas. They were saying, right, we're going to organise this activity. You know, and then some of them went on to careers in education, in the Y and beyond. So that was really, really, really special to see that.

Interviewer: That sounds really special. Even that story about your colleague who had moved all those kind of archive materials.

Interviewee: Oh no, this was somebody in the war. I never actually got to meet them, but we just heard about them.

Interviewer: Just to clarify, second World War?

Interviewee: Yes, yes, yes, sorry [laughing]. I mean, they could conceivably, because one of the wonderful things about the membership as well, actually, who didn't necessarily come to conferences because some of them were in their 80s but they still supported us and some of them have been quite, I think, radical thinkers for the day. They've been that, I think they're called the greatest generation, aren't they? Some of them, I think, were quite terrifying to some of the community education officials [laughing] who used to come to our AGMs or committee meetings and be like, oh, these posh ladies in tweeds and it was like, well, you know, talk to them about social justice. They're actually pretty on the ball [laughing]. They were really incredible as well. It was such a privilege to work with them. We had one lady who was actually in a retirement home and barely mobile, but still mobile, who would come into our AGM every year. She would also write a birthday card to each of the staff members every year and I remember one of them, Penny Turnbull, was brilliant. She got invited to a reception at 10 Downing Street where Margaret Thatcher was in and she hated Margaret Thatcher and she turned up and she realised that her and Margaret Thatcher were wearing the same Dior dress [laughing] and she said she spent the whole evening chatting very loudly to a miner. I think this was before the miner’s strike and making a point of doing so just because she wanted to upset Mrs Thatcher [laughing]. So, I mean, just characters like that who were just incredible women who'd really, really been, I think,

you know, real pioneers. You know, some of the first women to go to uni, really, really strong, strong members of the movement who stuck with it from being young women themselves until, you know, to the point where this, you know, I always remember the lady going back to her care home in Liberton and the last time I saw her, I mean, you know, she really was, you know, making the absolute most of every second of her life and the Y was part of that. So, it was amazing, really. Yeah, so that range of ages that you got to work with as well was incredible because I think there's something about our society that segregates people by age and there's a lot to be said for that because, obviously, as a young person, you know, your peer group is so important to you. You know, as a young parent, your peers are, you know, really great support but I think across generations as well, there's something really, really special about that. Really, really incredible and I think the Young Women's Movement is still really good at that. I remember there was a reception at the City Chambers. I think, was that maybe the start of the centenary celebrations, perhaps? Yes. Yeah, so that, again, Susan England was there, who was the centre manager at the Roundabout, who pioneered the anti-racist policy-making and education. Helen Hood, all these amazing people who've contributed so much but also, loads of young people I never met because they were the ones leading the movement now. That was really, really great to see and we'd always have that debate at every single conference. It was, do we get rid of the C? Do we not get rid of the C? [Laughing]. I was really pro-getting rid of the C but I could totally understand why other people wanted to keep it as well. So it was really great to go to that, sort of kick-start of the celebrations to hear about the process of how that had happened, the fact that it had happened successfully as well and it wasn't about diminishing the sort of Christian aspects. I think it was just about saying we're so much more than this, that we could still be part of this, but we're not limited to that.

Interviewer: And was that conversation round about, do we continue to name ourselves as a Christian organisation? Is that a conversation that had been happening for quite a while?

Interviewee: Oh, a decade. I think before I even got there as well. I think at the Roundabout Centre, we'd always named it the Roundabout Centre because A, because we wanted people to be able to find us, we were near a roundabout. It was easier for people to understand that but also because so many of the women who were part of the Management Committee, who were volunteering and who were staff members, weren't Christian, but respected the Christian tradition because there was a clause, I think, in employment contracts that, I think, I don't think you specifically had to be a Christian. I think at the Roundabout we had a slightly different clause in employment contracts and recruitment that you had to respect the Christian faith and what I always used to say is, you know, I respect all faiths, I don't belong to any of them and that was enough. Hopefully people were open-minded enough to accept that. So I think that's where it came from. Having said that, there were also lots and lots of women, some of them who were from all over the world, who also did have Christian, really, really strong Christian commitments as well. So, yeah, it was about, I think, understanding difference and respecting difference. Can I possibly take that? I'm so sorry.

Interviewer: I just want to kind of move back to when you were speaking about the World Summit in Kenya. I know you said that you weren't there at the time, but can you describe what that was and the kind of experiences that came back from that?

Interviewee: I think it was just completely mind-blowing, really. I mean, obviously there was a huge amount of fundraising that went on to, you know, get people across to Kenya and to set up accommodation and everything, but also to give them the support before going away together as a group to a radically different culture and country, just so that they would be prepared and ready for the experience. I do remember what came back was a single, because one of the things we'd always said in the movement was the YMCA, they've got a song, we just need a song. So, the YWCA of Kenya actually did it, they wrote a song, it's brilliant. It would be great to see if we could find that for the centenary. It's a beautiful song, it's just celebrating women and saying welcome, because obviously the event was happening and people were coming from all over the world to Kenya. Yeah, I mean, there was a shooting at the time as well, outside the conference centre, which I think was utterly terrifying but thankfully everybody was safe. I can't possibly do justice to what happened there because I wasn't there, but I do know, I remember Sarah, my friend who used to work at the Lochend YWCA, she kept a journal and shared photographs of her journey, as well as the actual conference in the city that people had gone to. She also had the chance to go to the YWCA in Malawi, which was a really strong, strong, YWCA association as part of that. So that was incredible as well. I do remember some of the young women from Livingston Y, who is very much a community-based Y in Craigshill, a lot of support to young parents and people living in economic inequality. I remember the young women from there who were just so shy when went and when they came back. They just had all this energy and confidence. They came round to all of the Scottish Ys afterwards to talk about their experiences and tell them what they'd done, and about the connections they'd made. It was amazing to see that, it really was. It was just really, really fantastic. Then Kirsty Kelly went to Kenya, I think, and then became world president. Sorry, my memory is really terrible. There'll be other people in the movement who know way, way more about this than me. It was great to see the movement really supporting these women to go along and have this amazing experience.

Interviewer: The World Summit, was this a one-off or was it something that happened more consistently?

Interviewee: I think it was...I can't remember if it happened every year or if it was every two or three years, something like that. It was a really, really big deal. Um, but, the Y as a movement had, was it 25 million members? The membership was the size of a small country. It was a huge organisation, it really was. Maybe it was annual, but that was the only time I remember, in all the time that I was there, that there was this concerted effort to take a delegation out to there. Maybe it was something that happened periodically.

Interviewer: Keeping with that international theme, you've spoken a little bit about the USA as well, and that you were influenced at the Roundabout Centre, by what was happening in the US. Can you talk a little bit more about what was going on and how that was influencing you?

Interviewee: So, I think Claude Barber, who I mentioned before, who was instrumental in working with local women in Edinburgh to set up the Roundabout Centre, was obviously one of the people who was a real figure. I never got to meet them, unfortunately, but I knew that they brought over a lot of practise from Chicago, where there was, I think, a lot of

really progressive community development work happening. So, I believe she brought a lot of practises over with her and ideas that people maybe hadn't had before. I also remember a volunteer who came to us to teach mindfulness. She was actually part of a Buddhist community at the time. She'd had a really, really difficult life, I think, and the Buddhist community had given her space and sanctuary. She came and asked if she could teach some mindfulness, which was just really, really powerful. Then an opportunity came up for her to go to the YWCA of New York, which she did, and then came back to tell us all about, you know, what was going on there. Eventually, she moved on from the Buddhist community because she felt she'd had her healing time. Then she came to America, and she'd seen the rest of the world, and she decided she wanted to come back into the wider world. That was fantastic as well. Also, the creche in the summer school, I think, drew quite heavily from a lot of American grassroots summer projects, breakfast clubs, things like that. Now, I don't know if this is true, but I do know that Chaka Khan was part of the Black Panther movement, and she set up breakfast clubs and summer camps for kids who wouldn't otherwise have those opportunities. So, I don't know if that's the lineage or if it was something that was much, much more widespread. I do know that the YWCA was very supportive of these programmes, recognising that, you know, rather than doing nice things to women in a room, if you actually created things like free childcare, you gave the opportunity for autonomy and agency for women to pursue what they wanted to do, whether that was work, whether that was education, whether that was respite. I think that was, again, strongly influenced by the American Y. I remember their branding colour being a persimmon orange that we adopted at one point [laughing]. We had all these lovely orange wristbands. I think at that particular time, the president was from the US YWCA, and they came to visit Scotland as well, which was fantastic to meet them and hear, about what they'd been doing, and they were really pleased to hear about what we'd been doing. Again, I think out of all the centres in Scotland at that time, they recognised the similarity because of the crash and the summer school. They recognised those points. Those were quite familiar to them. Whereas, I suppose, some of the other YWCAs would do work with rural communities, small rural communities in Scotland, which maybe was a little bit further from their experience, perhaps.

Interviewer: Thinking about the World Summit and this connection you have with the US, particularly all those themes round about advocacy and autonomy and liberation, to what extent do you feel that you were a part and included in a global movement of the YWCA?

Interviewee: Oh, definitely. I mean, not in a hands-on, everyday sort of way, but there were so many occasions where, you know, Musimbi Kanyoro coming in, talking to us about bodily autonomy as a way of saying, this is what 16 Days is about. This is what ending violence against women is about. Your body belongs to you. What happens to your body, that is your choice. It doesn't belong to other people. That was something that has always stayed with me and so, yeah, these lots of different opportunities to meet different people and the fact that they made the point of coming to Scotland, I suppose, when we were moving towards the possibility of independence, even though it didn't happen, that also attracted, I think, some input from people around the world. I think there's also a real fondness for Scotland in a lot of other countries because of the diaspora as well. So, yeah, those connections were there and it was really amazing to feel part of that movement and just that kind of start of, you know, there being 25 million members was, and to be honest, most of the membership was overseas as well. Most of it wasn't in the UK. It was beyond. That was incredible. I

mean, there was probably a lot that I didn't know about, but that in itself was really, really amazing. Does that still feel the same today? Is there still that sense of the movement being international?

Interviewer: That's a really good question. It's a good question. I think there is to some extent. I think it will depend a lot on people's personal experiences and how much they've been involved with the movement and what projects specifically. I know there's a lot of work done in terms of policy and participation in the Scottish Government, which kind of floats down into the UK. So, good question.

Interviewee: I just kind of wondered, because I suppose that's, I guess when the idea came in Scotland to kind of bring us all together, that was the good side of it, was linking into all those things, those international, as well as the other Scottish centres.

Interviewer: Again, with the Young Women's Movement currently being Scottish-based, I think it's very similar to your experiences of, as much as we have our remit and locality, we are influenced by our best practise and we also set that standard in terms of the mission of creating a truly inclusive space for young women and girls that they can use their own voice for and self-advocate for. As you kind of, your words of, rather than do things for women, giving them the tools to self-actualise. Thank you for explaining that on the world stage. I want to bring us back home a little bit and think about the context of Scotland specifically. You've mentioned a couple of names and a couple of locations. Could you give a general overview to start us off of your experience within the YWCA, Scotland specifically, and your connections across the nation?

Interviewee: Aw okay, I hope this isn't disrespectful, but my friend, who was very appreciative of the Roundabout Centre and the YWCA, we used to have this head office where all the city management sort of worked. She used to call that the mothership. [Laughing]. So our relationship with them was, yeah, it was interesting, an interesting one. We actually had to give them money because they didn't have a lot of funding and a lot of people felt that we would get funding from them, but that wasn't the case. No, we had to give them money because they asked to take over oversight of our finances, whereas previously that had all been done independently at different centres and they decided that they wanted to do this centrally. So that was quite a big change, and it involved people losing skills and things like that. So that was an ongoing piece of work, I think, for people to establish themselves within that new relationship and I think, you know, obviously some people felt they were losing things, but other people had a vision of how it should be. So that was interesting, but I did really appreciate a lot of the support we got from them as well. I guess our closest relationship was at Lochend, YWCA because they got a brand new building, which was wonderful and then Sarah, the project manager who came in there, we just worked quite closely together because we got on really well, we were close to each other. You know, we kind of, we had been at the Roundabout Centre for a little bit longer. Sarah had come in new to the organisation, so we were able to kind of suggest people she might want to get in touch with, things like that. So that was quite a close, long relationship. Livingston as well was relatively close by. So we didn't do joint activities with them, but we were in sort of regular contact and then we would meet quarterly as centre managers as well, which was really good in terms of peer support from a sort of management and

leadership point of view and we also were able to identify sort of commonalities in the way that we worked. So the person who phoned earlier, who was the creche coordinator, and I and some other members of staff went up to Moray, where there was a YWCA that also had quite a big focus on childcare, to just check out how they worked, what they did and it was just a really nice experience and we did it absolutely on the, you know, we got buses and trains and shared rooms in a guest house, that kind of thing, to make it possible and affordable but that was wonderful and then we used to sometimes circulate meetings around different centres as well to get to know each other, and then at conferences, obviously, the volunteers from different centres would get together, which was really nice as well. So, yeah, I mean, it was really great to have that wider pool of peer support to draw from, whereas, you know, at the Roundabout, we'd perhaps had that more locally before, but that was a definite change in time that came with a sort of merger. So it wasn't all bad. It wasn't all bad. [laughing]. There were some really good things that came out of it too.

Interviewer: That's good to hear. Just to double-check, the head offices or the mothership, where was that located?

Interviewee: So that was at 2A Randolph Crescent, which I think now has been sold again as luxury flats, unfortunately but yes, they were there. Then they sold that and moved into what was the Roundabout Centre and before that, round the corner from Randolph Crescent, which is in the west end of Edinburgh, very, very, very sort of beautiful, classical, neoclassical buildings. Round the corner, there's now a bar called Harry's Bar, but that used to also be part of the YWCA. I don't really know where I'm going with that, other than every time I see it, I'm like, that used to be the YWCA [laughing]. It was just a little basement space that possibly got bequeathed to the movement. Maybe. I'm not sure.

Interviewer: With that kind of in mind, earlier on you had said that with the merger, there was maybe a kind of loss of identity for the Roundabout Centre. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

Interviewee: I'm not sure if we felt that we were losing our identity. I think we felt we were being told what to do [laughing] and something was being imposed, to be completely honest. So I think however carefully that had been arrived at, we would have felt that, to be honest but it was done in quite a directive way that was different from our way of doing things. So I think that's kind of where we were with that. Yeah, but it did also bring different kinds of support that we hadn't had before. So HR support, operational support. So that also came with that.

Interviewer: And with that move to a more national or bureaucratic body, were you able to participate in more wider reaching or kind of cross-location projects at all?

Interviewee: I'm trying to think. I don't think we ever actually got to the point of doing joint delivery simply because geographically we were so spread out. It was more, I guess, that we would... I mean, there was... We'd had lottery funding for a volunteer project, which was then in the roundabout centre and with that proof of concept, the bigger Y then secured money to have that on a national level. So that happened but in terms of our daily practice, we had so much volunteering going on already that it didn't really change anything for us

that much but we did have this amazing, amazing, amazing person as the national volunteer development worker, Jenny Airy, who was just fantastic. She's from Australia. She was just a total force of nature and she was actually instrumental in getting the party of young women together to go to Kenya and I think she had a dream of taking women to Australia as well, but unfortunately that didn't happen. So she was wonderful. She really, really was and I think for the other projects, that maybe had a bit more of an impact simply because it built up volunteering where perhaps they hadn't had quite so much of that before.

Interviewer: And for... Given the context of Scotland at the time, what were the key themes or areas that projects, even locally, what kind of areas was it that you were trying to kind of work in with that kind of wider political and social context in mind?

Interviewee: Yeah, again, it was, I think, quite locally driven as well and I think for Livingston, it was very much about young parents and people who were living in a geographically quite... You know, a place where, you know, people just didn't have the same opportunities or education. People tended to be on really low incomes, so people were experiencing economic inequality. So that was quite specific to them. In Coupar Angus, I think it was more about what's it like to live in a rural community? What opportunities are there for young women and girls where there isn't the same sort of array of youth organisations available to them? I think the drive from head office was very much about we want direct work with young women and of course, we did that in our summer school, but they weren't keen on the rest of the summer school because it involved mixed gender groups in the younger age groups. Our point to them was, well, this is empowering towards mothers. This is something that might actually mean that older girls in a family don't have to spend their entire summer looking after younger siblings. So indirectly, it is work with young women, but they felt that that was too complicated to present to funders and to fit with the mission. I have to say, I think that was a really big mistake but that was their position. That's what they wanted to do, unfortunately and then the summer school had to stop. So, yeah, that was a shame, and also, they had the same attitude towards the creche. They didn't see it as direct work benefiting girls and young women. And because they said we're going to close the creche, the local authority then took our grant funding away. So the roundabout centre didn't have any funding. So, yeah, it was a real shame.

Interviewer: And what impact do you think that that maybe had on the communities that you were working with?

Interviewee: Interesting one, because a family centre grew up in Leith just before we closed the creche and hopefully that actually meant that there was an alternative provision doing something relatively similar to what we had done. So I guess the community responded after something was taken away. In terms of the summer school, I've never really seen anything of the same scale in terms of free sort of holiday or low-cost holiday childcare. So there were some groups that were set up by Sikh Sanjog and some other organisations. Yeah, but they were maybe a little bit more specific and not necessarily quite the same focus on intercultural work, perhaps. So, yeah, I think there would have been an impact on the community. Yeah.

Interviewer: So, obviously, it sounds like there's been a lot of change and not too much time from 1997 to early noughties. From your time in the organisation and all of those changes that were coming, what things did you learn from the organisation at the time?

Interviewee: Oh, so much, so much, definitely. I think just with partnership working, I think it's easy to think, oh, everything's going to be great, it's going to be wonderful and, yeah, that's a lovely, lovely perspective and things can be wonderful, but things will also be really difficult and it's good to just accept that because human beings look at things differently, feel things differently, have different priorities, and so I suppose it's just really important to really think about how do we work with difference, how do we work with disagreement, how do we work with conflict and acknowledge that as part of the everyday necessity of moving forward together because I think if conflict isn't allowed, then it gets suppressed. It's going to pop up at some point and it's going to be unplanned and it's going to be a lot messier than it is if we just give it space, acknowledge it. I feel like young people now have got a lot more of a handle on that kind of thinking than perhaps we did back in those days. Yeah, I think it's something I really notice about my daughter and her generation is that understanding of the complexity of how humans do things together and what it's good to be aware of.

Interviewer: Thank you for that. [Pause]. I think, yeah, so you've learned a lot from that personally. How do you feel that the organisation has evolved over time since then?

Interviewee: I think there's huge gaps in my knowledge because obviously as soon as I got to Crew in 2011, complete change of focus, really, really focused on Crew, very, very, very busy but I think, again, going to the centenary, I could see how far people had come. I could really see and I could feel the vibe was also very positive from what I could see. It felt that there was an acknowledgement of how difficult change had been, I think, you know, but also the fact that quite a lot of change had been achieved for the better and I could see young women taking charge of things, whereas when I was in the Y, it was all women my age being in charge of everything, to be completely honest. Young women were getting opportunities, but they weren't necessarily always in the driving seat but I definitely, definitely could see that at the event that I went to and it was very, very nice to see it, yeah.

Interviewer: So when was it that you had actually moved away from the movement?

Interviewee: I think it would have been 2009. So then I went to Fast Forward for two years, yeah.

Interviewer: Can you maybe fill in the gap between the end of the movement and to now, what roles you had, including those board roles that you were speaking of?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I carried on at Evaluation and Support Scotland for, I think, three or four years after I left the movement and then it was just too much. There was too much to do. Working for Fast Forward, I was part-funded by the NHS. So that was very interesting, learning how the NHS works as a system, very different from the voluntary sector. So again, it was like, oh, okay, here we have two completely different cultures coming together, trying to, trying to work together, and all the difficulties that can come from that. Yeah, that was

kind of taking a step back from management and going back into sort of direct work with people, going out to different groups and providing input and education. So that was really nice, really nice to do that. Then coming to Crew, it was much more about coming into the drug and alcohol treatment and support sector. So quite a different emphasis. We have quite a high proportion of women coming to our services here, which is quite unusual in the sector. A lot of drug treatment services are quite male-dominated. They're set up for men, to be completely honest. They're not necessarily very welcoming spaces for women but we've always been quite a female-heavy team in the counselling part of the project and also the counsellors are, their training, everything they do, their values are very much about creating safe spaces for people who previously probably haven't had a lot of those opportunities. Yeah, so, yeah. But it's, yeah, there's a whole huge amount of work, I think, still to be done looking at the different experiences of women in relation to drugs, the stigma around drugs and people who take drugs and, you know, the barriers that they face in terms of accessing support.

Interviewer: And do you feel that your kind of experience with the Young Women's Movement, or the YWCA, in kind of what extent has that influenced the kind of future work that you've gone on to do?

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely. I think what, you know, on the face of it, you would look at Crew and the YWCA and you'd think, well, what have they actually got in common? But Crew's very, very much grown up as a grassroots community organisation. It was started by ravers, educators, people who were a collective for a long time and would just go out to free parties, unlicensed parties and provide support. Handwritten notes about harm reduction on pieces of paper before we had any funding, you know. So that grassroots community development origin and also that commitment to, OK, recognising privilege, recognising power, you know, again, getting professionalised to the point where we do have a hierarchy in terms of staff and recognising that but also it's about, you know, you can have that and have an ethos. It's about respecting, accepting people, being really honest and open with them as well. Yeah, so I think, I hope those values and the sense of being in a values driven organisation have come with me and I think that was probably, when I applied for the role, I think that was something that hopefully came through in the application.

Interviewer: Yeah, and with that kind of values, kind of person first kind of approach, even in these other positions that we maybe have that we're different, like the NHS and that structure, how were you still able to use those values and skills and kind of transfer those into those other positions?

Interviewee: I think values, the wonderful thing about values is that you can, if you think, if you remember them and you understand them and you understand why they're there and you're committed to them, you can take them anywhere, you can take them to any situation, you know, and, you know, empathy is such an important one. It's just so fundamental and it's so lacking in a lot of the leadership you see in the wider world at the moment. It's just, even if you don't like someone, even if you're different from somebody, if you just take a little bit of time to understand what their experience might have been, you can have a much better chance of achieving something than if you just decide to other them. You know, I'm not saying I'm perfect, but that is a value that I have found really, really

important in situations that are difficult, you know. So I really hope that, yeah, I think having a grounding in the movement was definitely really important for that. So, yeah, I appreciate that. I was very lucky to have that.

Interviewer: So obviously we're celebrating the centenary of the movement and it's had a really long history and we're thinking about the future as well. So it is a women's organisation. It's been more orientated as for women by women and that's something you kind of touched on throughout as a theme. Do you think that the movement at the time that you were involved, at any other point, including now, was or is a feminist organisation?

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely. Well, yeah, I mean, I suppose there could be so many different definitions of feminism, especially at the moment. It's a really hot topic, isn't it? Yeah, I mean, I think at the Roundabout Centre everybody identified as feminist, but we also recognised that there were different ways of being a feminist. There were the Radfans. There were feminists who recognised that men experience oppression too, not in the same way as women, not to the same extent as women, but the patriarchy is very, very, you know, that's my personal point of view, that the patriarchy, capitalism, techno-feudalism is all pretty bad for men as well, but it's being sold as something that's good for them. So, yeah, I think there was diversity, but definitely there was a sense of feminism. Quite interesting in the late 90s, because there was that whole culture around with lads, mags and, you know, things being a little bit glib, maybe, I think, 90s culture, quite glib, quite hedonistic compared to now, because basically I think as young people then we had probably more money, more freedom, and we didn't perhaps pay as much attention to what it might be like not to have that. I do remember a debate at the Roundabout Centre, because we had a group, and one member of their group, a group from another organisation coming in, they had a member who was trans, and I remember the centre manager at the time asking around, oh, do you think we should let a trans person in? And we were like, of course and then some people were like, oh, no, no, no, we can't possibly have a trans person, because, oh, the Muslim ladies won't like it, the African ladies won't like it and when we actually asked the Muslim ladies and the African ladies, they were like, you know, transness is something that our cultures have recognised for centuries. Don't put this on us. Don't blame us. If you don't want them, you be honest about that. It was a real eye-opener that people had kind of jumped to that position of thinking that, oh, well, you know, if people don't have a white skin, they can't be as educated, they won't have the same level of sophistication, and we must protect them from something that we're actually quite scared of ourselves. So that was a really interesting, interesting, yeah. Anyway, but yeah, I mean, I personally feel it's a feminist movement. I hope, you know, I'd be interested to hear what young women today think of that word and what it means in the context of everything that's going on just now, I suppose, cultural wars. So, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And what were those, you know, maybe values or practises that you had when it came to, you know, operating as a feminist organisation that you had put in practice?

Interviewee: Oh, that's a really good point. I think with senior girls, I think it was about offering opportunity and, like you say, about how much direction and autonomy can we possibly provide? How much freedom can we possibly provide within the constraints of what we have to do as youth workers? I think it was about supporting leadership by women

for women as well, like encouraging people that actually, yes, if that's what you want to do, you should go for that and that there's a way to do that as well. I remember talking at conferences when I was pregnant with women from the Y around the world who were saying, of course you can do that, of course, this is what I did, this is how I did it. You know, just practical strategies like that for people because, you know, I think a lot of people would view young women at the time, I think there was a lot of stigma at the time towards younger women who had children at a young age. I don't know if it's quite so bad now. It feels like there's other groups that are getting picked on, so maybe they're getting a bit of a break. But that was a hugely, hugely stigmatised group at the time. So a lot of young women with young children would be training at the YWCA, would be getting support at the YWCA and that was all about, I think, making sure there was space for a group who were really quite reviled as just all sorts of things that were absolutely nothing to do with them were kind of put at their door in the 90s. The housing shortage is because of lots and lots of young women having babies so they can get a house and it's like, of course young women have babies and why shouldn't they have a house? Why is it that the government isn't building enough houses? That's the big question that this is deflecting everybody from. So I don't know if we ever had conversations that went to that extent of analysis, but certainly the thing was about being there for young mums and recognising that, you know, if they wanted to spend time with their kid, that was really valid but if they wanted to also pursue education or anything else that they wanted to do, that was equally important.

Interviewer: Thank you for that. As we are thinking, as I say, about the future and having this time to reflect with us... Um, quite a big question of, during your time or otherwise as part of the Y, what do you think was the greatest kind of achievements that were achieved through the movement?

Interviewee: Oh wow, gosh. I remember the 104 Pairs of Shoes exhibition. So two volunteers from the Roundabout Centre, Claire and Aisha, had heard this statistic through the Y of the number of women who died as a result of their partners murdering them. Was it 104 every year, I think? And so they collected, they had very impressive shoe collections, [laughing], and so they collected 104 pairs of shoes between themselves and from friends and family and put them out on the pavement outside the Roundabout Centre and then the Y, Jenny Ayrie and Joan Bree, I think were instrumental in this, decided to do a national exhibition at the Scottish Parliament. So they asked lots and lots of famous people for pairs of shoes to have on display at the Parliament to bring that awareness raising into Parliament to try and influence politicians and decision makers about the importance of acting to address domestic abuse and violence against women. So obviously the Y isn't the only group of people who have tried to do that, but I just thought it was a really, it was a really accessible way of presenting that, because I think conversations around violence against women are really difficult for people to have, the general public, a lot of people have been affected by it, and it can be extremely triggering. Having the focus on shoes, I think, highlighted the extent of the problem, but also there was some glamour and some remembrance in there, but in a way that wasn't, I don't know, that was also artistic and creative as well, and I think having high profile people donating their shoes made it extra powerful as well. So I thought that was a huge achievement, I thought that was great, and I thought it was great that something quite small that Claire and Aisha had started outside the Roundabout Centre was then taken wider by the national YWCA to achieve something

at the Scottish Parliament. There's so many things, so many things. I think, you know, about those young women who went to Kenya, and the change, just the individual change in somebody having an experience like that and then seeing the careers they went into. There must be so many women like that throughout the movement, hundreds of thousands probably, I think that's a huge achievement as well. I'm just trying to think. I think the movement in itself, moving from something that was, to be completely fair, probably dominated by people like me, sort of well-intentioned, white, middle-class women, to a movement that is now led by young women, I think that's a huge achievement as well. No disrespect to sort of [laughing] the older women who were a huge part of the movement as well, but I think seeing that development is incredible, I think that's really exciting. Yeah, I think the achievement of the Roundabout Centre, before I got there, the work that they did to try and create space where there was none for people who really felt completely sidelined, unable to access services, turned away from services in a lot of cases, I think that was really important and I think in Craigshill, what the Livingston YWCA did there, was incredible. Again, young women, a stigmatised group in a stigmatised area, experiencing massive, massive inequality. I think that just being and standing beside women must have really, really, really helped the children and the women for generations, many generations. Yeah, I think for all the Y, the YWCA in Kirkcaldy, that was a huge part of the community as well, a huge cultural activities programme there. Yeah, so, too many to count, I think, too many to count. I think it's difficult to understand until you go to a country like Hungary, I'm sure there are many other countries where women's presence and agency is a lot more curtailed. I mean, I'm not saying we don't have issues here, because we definitely do, but that was another experience through the Y, actually, the UPE Centre. I was seven months pregnant at the time, probably shouldn't really have been allowed to fly, but I was. And I was kind of waddling around Budapest on my own, and I'd go into a cafe, and women would come and sit with me, because if you sat on your own in a cafe, that meant you were a sex worker, and people would be, you know, you'd either get thrown out or someone would come and probably proposition you, which I hadn't realised before I got there. It was a society where respectable women didn't go out on their own, you know, so that was quite eye opening.

Interviewer: Sounds like a lot of work that's been done has been so significant and impactful. Without the YWCA in Scotland, or without the Roundabout Centre, what impact do you think that would have? Where would we have been without it?

Interviewee: Well, I mean, optimistically, I like to think that somebody else would have seen that need. I mean, those women were at the bus stop. It's just, you know, I guess the fact that Claude Barber happened to kind of notice and think, oh, how can I approach people respectfully and just check out what's going on? I would love to think that something else would have come of that. Maybe those women themselves might have, you know, found some space, but at the time I think they felt, you know, people just, you know, every door was being shut in their face. Even just trying to speak to the school or the library, they just weren't getting much opportunity to kind of access what they needed. So I like to think that somebody would have stepped in there, but I suppose maybe people just would have kept walking past as well. So it's really sobering to think perhaps of what wouldn't have happened there, or if, you know, that Livingston Centre wasn't in Craigshill, you know, how difficult it would be to bring up a family on very little money without having somewhere to

go where you're always welcome, where they recognise you, where they're glad to see you, where you can get practical help accessing benefits. You know, all these things that sound so sort of simplistic, but without those things, where do you even start to kind of flourish and survive? So, yeah, no, it's, yeah, you know, those girls from Iraq, you know, I'm sure they would have had adventures and explored and found things out, but, you know, would it have just taken them that much longer to do that? So, yeah, no, I really appreciate the movement, I really do. You know, I don't think I'd be here without it at all. I think I probably wouldn't have the confidence that I have, or the experiences that I've had, definitely.

Interviewer: That's quite a hypothetical question, so thank you for trying to answer that.

Interviewee: Yeah, no, it scared me a bit, really because, you know, there's so many different possibilities, aren't there?

Interviewer: So, as we think about wrapping up, looking towards the future, what do you, what would you like the movement to look like and develop into in the future?

Interviewee: Well, I'm not actually going to be here for that much of the future, and that's okay. I think the young women should be [laughing] should be deciding what the movement looks like. I was so pleased to see trans and non-binary people at the centre, I think that is really important to me, I think especially now. You know, we have, some of our volunteers are American, they don't know if they can go home. So I would really love to see the movement to continue to support all women, you know, and non-binary people, I'm getting very emotional again. I think it's really important as well that we have a diverse movement. You know, we recognise that whiteness is a big problem in our society. We need to make sure that we have ways of making sure that people of colour, black people, have access to opportunities. You know, that there are real barriers that they face, there is systematic oppression in our systems. We need to kind of think about how do we address that in ourselves, first of all, and as a movement and I think I saw diversity at that event as well, definitely, but I think that's really, really important. It's more important than ever, again. I don't want to talk about America too much because it's a bit depressing, but, you know, I have, again, friends who are American citizens who are worried about going back there and what might happen to them simply because they're not white and they don't feel safe from ICE. So, yeah, that diversity and sort of sense of justice and safe space in the movement, I think that's really, really fundamental and I believe that consumer capitalism is dying. I would love for it not to be replaced with techno-feudalism, which is a really sort of pessimistic future scenario that is being talked about but I think there is something about community development and feminism and anti-racism that gives you an idea of what the future could actually look like if we decide to look beyond ourselves and think about what's going to be good for the greatest number of people possible. So that's what I'd like to see. That's a really good future to look forward to.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for talking us through your experience.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: It's been really great and quite an honour to hear that from you.

Interviewee: Thank you so much.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you'd like to share before we wrap up?

Interviewee: Just, I guess, again, environmental justice as well. That's really, really important and I'm not saying that that's not part of the movement. It's just, obviously, I'm not as up to speed, but that is obviously the other thing that we really need to think about in the future but I'm pretty sure that you're really working on that and hopefully, when I'm still here, that's something that I can contribute to as well. So, thank you. Oh, it's been really nice to talk to you.

Interviewer: Thank you.