

Heidi McLean 24.05.25

Interviewer: My name is Kelly and I am interviewing Heidi McLean for the Young Women's Movement, Young Women Remember Project. To begin can you please tell me your full name, where you are from and your previous role with the Young Women's Christian Association?

Interviewee: My name is Heidi McLean, and I am originally from England [laughing]. I moved to Scotland when I was 18, and I've been working for YWCA since 2008, so I've been with the organisation up to date for 16 and a half years.

Interviewer: And how old were you when you joined the organisation if you don't mind?
[Laughing]

Interviewee: Oh my goodness, maths isn't my strong point, I'll try and work this out. I'd be in my 30s anyway.

Interviewer: So how did you get involved with the organisation, how did you first hear about it?

Interviewee: So I started volunteering, so I was currently looking for work. I'd been previously working with Rosemount Lifelong Learning Organisation as an admin assistant, but that was only like temporary and then I was looking for volunteer work, so I was volunteering there for a while, and then looking for somewhere else, and then it was actually somebody at Rosemount Lifelong Learning that found out about volunteering opportunities with YWCA Glasgow at that time and it was on the reception desk, and I thought, well, why not just try and give it a go and get further skills in the community, because I knew what I wanted to do, I knew I wanted to work within community and in the voluntary sector, and I like working with people. So I thought, right, try something different. It's the same kind of work, but somewhere else. So I went for a meet with one of the staff that was there at the time, and chatted through opportunities, and then got signed up for volunteering. So I was volunteering, I think, probably about three times a week at that point, like at the start point. On the reception desk, got to know quite a lot of the staff quite well, and the women that were coming and going, and at that time we had a creche as well, so some of the kids coming and going, so that was quite nice. So while I was there, a job opportunity came up for a project administrator, to be the administrator for the Lifelong Learning Officer at the time. So I applied for it, had to go through all the usual process. Then I got accepted for interview, and in the interview I had to do a test and everything, like doing spreadsheets, and setting up a spreadsheet and putting data and all that into it and stuff, had an oral interview and stuff, as you do and then I thought, I probably won't get it, because there was about six other people going for it [laughing] and then I got the phone call, like, yeah, you've been successful. So I was no longer a volunteer, I was then a paid member of staff, so I was project administrator for around about two years or so. Then, while I was there, the Lifelong Learning Officer at the time, she only worked two days a week, whereas my contract, I'd been offered like her full-time contract, so I was there all week. So I was doing a lot of her work, and I was also taking on some of the Lifelong Learning Officer's work, because she wasn't there. So I kind of learned a lot of the stuff, like

what she did. Then she also had another job at Glasgow Uni, and got offered a full-time position there, so said that she was leaving and I said to her, aw I'd love to do your job [laughing]. Like, I'd like the admin side of it, but I like the project side more, and I didn't know that I'd like the project side more until I was actually doing it and she said, I think you'd be brilliant in it. Like, you know, just kind of watch what I'm doing, and basically just encourage me to go for it. So I applied for the job, again, had to go for an interview and stuff like that and I got it [laughing] and I was kind of doing it on an acting up position, first of all, for six months and then after that, they'd said that I'd done really well in my role, and I got taken on full-time as the Lifelong Learning Officer. So yeah, so I did that but I was still doing admin for so many hours, so it was a bit tricky. I was doing admin for, oh God, I think it was 16 hours, and then the rest of it was project, like, Lifelong Learning Officer and then it kind of changed my, I was going up and down different things while I was there. So at that point, we were based in Charing Cross, and it was a, like an old three-storey building, and no lift. Office right at the top [laughing]. So yeah, so I was a lot fitter in those days [laughing]. Up and down the stairs, up and down the stairs. Like if someone came into reception and wanted you, I'd get buzzed up, they'd come down and see what they want. They need something that's in the office, so back up to the office, get that, come back down. I'd have to go back and back. So going up and down the stairs at least like 10 times a day. Yeah, so that was it really. So that's kind of like where I started from.

Interviewer: So apart from running up and down the stairs, what did the Lifelong Learning Officer role entail? What was your job?

Interviewee: Okay, so advertising programmes. That'd be a workshop or a short course. We did a lot of different courses then. So we did ESOL, so that's like English for learners of a second language. We did IT, so we had an IT suite and I also had IT skills background, so I delivered some of the IT classes. So that was within my role as well, it was like actually delivering, not just like recruiting and advertising, but delivery as well. So delivery was part of the role. So I delivered IT classes a couple of times a week and a social group as well, I kind of like helped, supported with the social group. That was the Building Women's Capacity Officer's role was actually, the social group was her kind of role but sometimes if she was not there or I needed to support her with anything, then I would take that role as well. So I got to know the women quite well that were coming in and out of the courses and also the children that were using the creche. So my role was really just like advertising programmes, recruiting for the programmes, monitoring the programmes. Also helping with reports as well. Doing my own reports, we call them session reflections but back in the day it was just called reports. So, yeah, so it was quite a full on job, there was a lot going on [laughing].

Interviewer: Do you know what else was going on sort of more broadly within the organisation, outside the groups that you were working with?

Interviewee: So at that time it was just like, Glasgow was on its own then, so we didn't merge with like the YWCA in Scotland until a bit later. So outside we were doing lots of different things like fundraising activities and stuff like that and there was things in the background obviously like meeting with other people. So there was networking going on and trying to get other groups involved and stuff like that as well. So you were part of, it was

YWCA Glasgow, then it merged to YWCA Scotland and then moved on to the Young Women's Movement. I've been for the whole lot, the whole change.

Interviewer: So when it was moving from just being Glasgow to being Scotland, when did that happen?

Interviewee: So that happened [pause] trying to remember the actual date. Kind of like the start of, I feel like from about 2012 to 2014, that was kind of like the, kind of discussion period and then 2014 we were kind of fully there and we'd kind of moved also between that time. So we had a building in the Charing Cross and then there was a bit of a period of uncertainty in a way, of not sure what was going on because we were kind of kept in the dark a little bit originally but we knew that things were looking a bit [laughing] shaky and we had to, the building we were in was, originally it was our own building but a long way before I started they sold that building to Hackens and Patterson, that had the building next door. So we were leasing off of them and then our lease was coming to an end and we didn't renew the lease because there was a lot wrong with the building. We were flooded umpteen times and being a really old building, it wasn't good. So the powers that be at the top decided like okay we'll find somewhere else. The building they found was not great because it was on Bath Street. Now as of the floor itself we were almost fine but because of the nature of the people that were in it, so it was full of lawyers and solicitors. Don't take really that kindly to charities coming in that have got people coming and going all the time and people getting lost and going to the wrong floor and they're constantly bringing people to the wrong floor. So yeah, so within that transferring period of going from YWCA Glasgow to YWCA Scotland we had that move in the middle and whilst we were in that move in Bath Street that's when it all kind of transferred over. So it was kind of uncertain times and it was a bit frightening but unknown. Like you don't know what you don't know [laughing]. So yeah, so it was like okay this is happening, is it going to be a good thing, is it going to be a bad thing? But there was a lot of kind of like, talk, Jackie Scott at the time was the director for YWCA Scotland. She spoke to each one of us individually and our thoughts on it and what we thought it would be like for us. Would we be willing to go forward and stay with the team as part of YWCA Scotland? And I was like that, yeah [laughing]. Because I love what I do and I just want to stay with the organisation and I could see the things that they were doing and the things that Jackie had said, you know, like this is going to be happening, this is going to be happening. I could see it as a lot safer option rather than just saying no and trying to find somewhere else and maybe I wouldn't be able to find somewhere else straight away, I don't know and within the voluntary sector it's difficult and funding reliant. So I kind of like, just stayed with the team and went forward and it was the best decision.

Interviewer: Did your role in the project change as part of that?

Interviewee: No, our roles changed just by name really. What we were doing didn't really change. The stuff that we were still doing day to day, we were still doing but it was just the role that changed. So we all got made, well not all of us, but a lot of us got made Tutor Organisers. So my role changed from Lifelong Learning Officer to Tutor Organiser and that was kind of just a shift in title really but yeah, in role name, but not changing what I was doing.

Interviewer: In terms of other projects that the organisation would do, did they sort of carry on the same as well?

Interviewee: No, so there was a massive change. So a lot from our original team, a lot of people either left of their own accord. Or like were told you, we can no longer keep you on. So they unfortunately had to go and find somewhere else but I think the good thing that they did do for some team members, because we had a creche and we had an after school care, although we couldn't keep our creche, and that kind of went before we kind of merged to YWCA Scotland because it kind of, when we moved to Bath Street, we were trying to get planning permission for a creche but that fell through because people in the building didn't agree to it and stuff. So we kind of left our creche, but the team was still working because we still had an after school care in several schools in Glasgow. So we had kind of partnership with what were originally YMCA and then they took us on, they kind of helped with a lot of finance stuff as well and took on the after school cares. So they took on the after school cares and it was a win for them because it was extra schools for them but they also took on our staff, trained our staff up a lot better. Also gave them management positions within their roles of managing the after school cares, which was good for them. Yeah, so that, that was good. That's kind of like, now they've left those positions because they, I think, were struggling with funding as well but it's been good in their favour because the training they've learnt from that, they've now set up their own mobile creche.

Interviewer: So did you as a person or as an organisation work closely with YMCA, either when it was Glasgow or when it was Scotland? Did you kind of have that relationship?

Interviewee: Not too closely at first when we were YWCA Glasgow, I'd say more when we were going into YWCA Scotland. So obviously it changed from YMCA to, I can't remember what it was now [laughing] it's gone right over my head. But yeah, so the organisation that it became, and that's what it was. They've changed their name again now but yeah [laughing].

Interviewer: And, kind of after the merger, what was on the agenda at the time? What were the focal points and projects?

Interviewee: So when we merged completely, we were still doing a lot of the programmes that we were originally doing. We were doing, like were still doing ESOL classes, we were still doing IT because at that time when we merged up and we were still in Bath Street, we had an IT suite there as well, so I was still delivering IT classes. Also still just promoting our classes and recruiting and monitoring and also going to network meetings and stuff as well, still doing a lot of that. So my role didn't really change, and a lot of the other team that were still there, they didn't really change, and it wasn't really until a little bit later when we moved again. So we were only in Bath Street for, I think it was around six months, it wasn't that long at all. It seems like a long time when you're there, but it went really quick kind of in terms of looking at it now, it was a really short period of time. So we moved from there to Well Park Enterprise Centre in the east of the city, so kind of not far from the city centre, but going into Deniston kind of area in the east end and that was like a big shift and that was then a downsizing of staff because it was just really a core staff of what we then called the Glasgow Centre. So, yeah so we had a manager and three programme coordinators and we

had our finance administrator for a little while, but not for long because then she left and got another job. So it was really just one manager and three coordinators.

Interviewer: And did that change the projects and the things that you were trying to do because you had a smaller staff team?

Interviewee: It did a bit. So for a little time we didn't run IT classes because it was my role as well to try and get the new IT suite up and running. So that took a little bit of time and I was in communications with Jackie Scott at the time and IT Scotland, trying to get all that in place. So that took a little bit of time getting the IT classes back again so we didn't run them straight away for a while. We were still running a lot from the college, so at that time we had a partnership with a college. Well, three colleges in Glasgow, so we were working with City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Clyde College and Kelvin College. They would come in and deliver English classes, so ESOL, and also some other community classes, so working with others and communications and stuff like that. So there was different things, social care as well, we did that. So there was a few different courses that were kind of ongoing that we'd had for quite a long time and I built that relationship with the college, like the partnership, to kind of encourage more courses from them. So the college was like a big factor for the Glasgow Centre, I would say, at that time, because they ran a lot of the courses. We delivered, which was a fairly new programme at that time, called Empowering Pathways. So that was kind of new when we moved into the Glasgow Centre, and that became our like, our core programme for, you know, the Glasgow Centre and YWCA Scotland at that time.

Interviewer: So what did that programme consist of?

Interviewee: So, when it started out, we used to run one in-house programme, which is the one that I would run, and my colleague would deliver outreach. She was the outreach coordinator, so she would go to different organisations outside of the centre within Glasgow, so delivered to them as well, but it was the same programme. So within-house, it was a 12-week programme, because at the end of it, we ran what was called the Next Steps programme, which was looking at progression and getting workshops in and stuff like that but yeah, so it ran over three days at first, and then we kind of changed it to just one day a week. So it was a 12-week programme and a 10-week programme on an outreach basis. So the 12-week one in-house, so I was delivering that. So we had modules, so there was, and it's kind of similar now, but it's changed a little bit, but originally it was Empowering Women, then we did "Life Books", which is more kind of a creative element and then 'It's Your Glasgow', so that's learning a little bit about Glasgow history, and a little bit about the services that are available because we worked a lot with, and still do work a lot with, young women and new Scots to Glasgow, and then 'It's Your Parliament', so that's looking at politics on a very, very low scale. So just like what is out there, like differences between the UK Government and the Scottish Government, the two parliaments, like what was on. How can they engage with the services, how can they find out who their MSP is, their councillor and their MP, and who to speak to if they have an issue. We kind of still do that now with them, but it's changed a lot in the format that it was.

Interviewer: It's good to hear that, it's good that it still runs. Do you know roughly, given that it's been running for so long, how many people will have gone through that process?

Interviewee: Oh goodness, hundreds [laughing]. So, looking at this time, so we ran three a year in-house, and I think six a year outreach. Our target was 12 for each programme. So we would try and aim to get 12, but sometimes you wouldn't get full 12. Maybe you'd get 12 sign up, but you'd get like say between 8 and 10 complete but yeah, so if you think of it in that terms, like how many have been participating since it started? [unclear dialogue].

Interviewer: So have you seen, like the women who do that programme, have you seen the impact of that programme from when they came out of it?

Interviewee: Definitely. So yeah, I mean as an organisation, you know, we like to work with women and encourage empowerment and change. So yeah, when they start, we work with a lot of women. A lot of women that do that programme have kind of like either isolated, low confidence, low self-esteem, different varied backgrounds, obviously we've interviewed, we still do, but a lot of asylum seekers and refugees, new Scots to Glasgow. So the English levels as well would not be like really high, although for Empowering Pathways, we recommended that they had an English level of like intermediate one as kind of a start because that, to the understanding that's in the content of the course, otherwise they might struggle. Sometimes we have people just a little bit lower than that if they were good at like communication, their writing might not have been perfect and that's fine, but as long as they could kind of understand, then that was okay. So yeah, so lots of different, we've also worked with people from like within recovery and they may have kind of like experienced trauma backgrounds and stuff like that. So from loads and loads of different backgrounds, so there wasn't like one specific group of women that we've worked with and at that time in the Glasgow Centre, we worked with women from 16 to whatever. So there was no upper age limit then, until it kind of changed to the Young Women's Movement talk about that a bit later [laughing].

Interviewer: So I know you mentioned like working with the college kind of in partnership with that. Are there any other organisations, charities that you've worked in partnership with?

Interviewee: Yeah, loads [laughing]. So we've worked with and still have connections with Skills Development Scotland. They provide workshops for us and advice for women progressing and wanting to like find skills going into employment, or just finding out kind of what to do, like the choices that are there. We've worked with Empower Women for Change about like entrepreneurship, starting up their own business. Volunteer Glasgow for volunteering opportunities. So again, they would provide workshops for us on volunteering. Who else have we worked with? [Laughing] I'm trying to remember now, it's like going back. So lots of different organi... So like even like organisations, when we're going out of organisations to deliver, so I suppose that's like a partnership. So Phoenix Futures was one residential, so we've had a long-standing partnership with them and Anna Yeso is another one. Again, that's a centre for families, particularly women with children. Romana Love, we've got a partnership with them. So loads of different organisations that we've kind of partnered up with in the years.

Interviewer: So do you feel that the organisation has impacted the community?

Interviewee: Definitely. Yeah, definitely and it's still growing.

Interviewer: Brilliant. So I think moving on to the next merger. So when it came to merge with YWM, how did that sort of develop?

Interviewee: Okay, so yeah, the merger was, it had been talked about for like a few years beforehand. So, the first kind of merge was like the name changed. So before we actually moved to Young Women's Movement on its own, the name from YWCA Scotland alone changed to YWCA Scotland, the Young Women's Movement. So we were that for quite a while and then, and we had a rebrand then, so there's been like two kind of rebrands and the logo's changed and everything. So at that kind of point, when it changed to YWCA Scotland, the Young Women's Movement, that's like a logo change. That was like the more colourful logo. You've probably seen that one, but yeah, that sort of changed then, and then we changed to just the Young Women's Movement and that was the time then that like, we kind of, in the Glasgow centre, lost a big chunk of funding. We lost our Glasgow Community Fund, which funded a lot of the Glasgow centre core costs, and also partnerships with the college. So it was a big, big change for us. I would say out of the whole organisation, the Glasgow centre was the one that had the most kind of impact of change in terms of like who we worked with and what we did because the Glasgow centre, because we lost that fund, and it kind of came along the same time period as the merger to YWCA, to the Young Women's Movement. We kind of lost the Glasgow centre, so we gave it up because we couldn't afford to keep it going. The rent was also going up as well, extortionately, and the cost of electricity and it was like not long after Covid, so we were just kind of like recovering back from Covid and just back to the centre and then like lost that funding and we thought, why are we really keeping the centre open? We're really just keeping it open for the colleges. The colleges weren't giving us anything, like they weren't paying us for room hire, they weren't paying travel expenses for Young Women, like we were paying them travel expenses out of our funds. You know, are we just basically just paying for the rent and the heat to come in, be there for college courses coming in and out, and then just the one course that we run. So we took a decision to let the Glasgow centre go. We were on the hunt for somewhere else in the city centre, and basically just all working from home. So now we just all work from home and deliver outreach programmes to different organisations. So we still deliver our Empowering Pathways programme to different organisations, the same as we did before on an outreach basis, but to more. So we don't do any in-house programmes anymore, so that's changed, and also what came with the merger into the Young Women's movement was the age change for Glasgow. So the Glasgow centre no longer worked with women 16 plus, no upgrade limit, we were then across the whole organisation 16 to 30 and some younger audiences, because we work with schools as well, so we still work with primary schools, P7s, and some secondary schools. So there are younger age groups, but yeah.

Interviewer: What is the thing you do with the younger age groups?

Interviewee: So YEquality is a programme we deliver with primary schools, so it's P7s, so it's boys and girls we work with there. So they attend 11-year-olds, and it's a five-week programme. Some schools choose to take it as a four-week programme, just to fit in with their timescales, or they get a choice to see the session plans and decide what session plans

will work for them, and if they think that one will not really work for their school, or maybe they're doing something similar, then they can choose to just take certain sessions but yeah, so the five sessions is exploring gender, so we talk a lot about gender stereotypes, we have a lot of games and really interactive stuff designed in the programme, so that it's fun learning, but they're still getting something from it, still learning from it. So that's the first one, then it's body image and self-esteem. So the body image and self-esteem one is really good for that age group to recognise a lot of things going on, not just within themselves, but also within society and social media and stuff like that, they might have seen things, they might have questions about it, so it's a really good, kind of session. Then they do leadership, which is again about learning about leaders in their own life, and what leadership is, and how they can get involved in leadership opportunities. So some of them say like, oh I'm a captain, house captain, or I've done this, I've done that, but not really realising that that is leadership, and they learn a lot from it and one fun activity they do in that one is creating their own business or organisation, and thinking about leadership, so the roles, like who's going to be the director or the CEO, who's going to be the managers of teams, so they say, I'll do that, you can do this, you can do that, and they put their names on the sheet, and we've had sweet shops, we've had charity organisations, we've had chocolate factories, we've had all sorts of different stuff, so it's fun, and they love doing that, and also doing activities when they're moving around the room and stuff as well, so yeah, they like a lot of fun and at the end, they do next steps to high school, so that's like discussing their worries, and what they're excited about going to high school. They get a certificate at the end, and a little badge. So they're a YEquality champion, so yeah, they love it.

Interviewer: How long is that project...we can take a wee break if you want.

Interviewee: Cheers. [Coughing].

Interviewer: So how long has this project been running for?

Interviewee: So, the project started, I'm trying to think of the year, would have been when we were in the Glasgow Centre, so when we were in the Wellpark Centre, I think we'd been there probably about a year, so, oh, I don't know particularly, maybe about 2016? 2017? Kind of like started off, it didn't start as YEquality though, so when we started the programme, it started as Y Girls, and we were only working with girls. So we would go in and deliver to girls, and the boys would be taken off and do something else. Which was fine at the time, but then some of the schools were saying to us, like, can you not do something for the boys? You know, like, it'd be really beneficial for the boys to get this as well and they were asking questions, and the girls would be going like, oh, we've been doing this, we've been doing that, and the boys would be like, oh. So we had a think about it, and decided, well, maybe we could do the boys, so then Y Boys was developed as well, so they were getting taught the same thing, but in different classrooms, so two facilitators would go out, so it was myself and Libby at the time. So Libby would go and teach Y Boys, and I would do the Y Girls. Or if we had volunteers, they would help as well. So they were separate. Then there was another rethink, and thought, well, why do we not just teach them in the one room? Because again, there was like, you know, teachers or like some of the kids saying like that, oh, why, you know, why aren't we all in this class? You know, maybe we should be all together. So Y Equality was, like, developed, and the programme had a little bit of a kind of,

like, shake up, and looked at the session plans, made it a bit more interactive, and a bit more, kind of like, teaching what it's supposed to be teaching, but yeah, kind of changing to update the programme a little bit. So now we deliver to the boys and come to the same class. Which is good news.

Interviewer: Have you had any feedback to that project?

Interviewee: See, the one kind of challenge we've had is, we deliver to a lot of Catholic schools and because we touch on exploring gender, some of the schools, that's the one they choose not to have in the school and it's not so much that the teachers or the head teacher don't want it, it's they're thinking about what are the parents going to say? What is the diocese and the church going to say? So they're thinking of their reputation, really, because we have delivered that one before, and we have had some parents question, why is my child getting taught this? Why are they bringing up stuff like this? Why are they saying stuff like this? And this day and age, it's like, come on, you know, they need to be aware of what's going on and it's not as if we talk about anything sensitive, and we don't go in depth on anything. It's just really telling them stuff that's already out there, but have they got any questions, and really just getting them to discuss stuff together.

Interviewer: Have you had any kind of complaints or pushback like that for other projects that you do? [Unclear Audio].

Interviewee: Not too much. I would say the more pushback we've had is like social media, like people just toxic, negative comments on socials but the comms team are brilliant, and they handle that, and we choose not to engage with it. We chose to disconnect from Twitter because of that as well, because of that reason but they're always like really super on board with looking out for that toxic negativity, yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think being more of a standalone organisation has enabled you to push those boundaries with the kind of things you've talked about, the programmes you're delivering, and how you're reacting to the negativity?

Interviewee: Definitely. Yeah, definitely. I think because we are without blowing our own trumpet, we're good at what we do, and we do it well, and we always kind of research, research is a really key point in everything, so we always research everything we're doing. We make sure that we're doing it right, and obviously, we learn from mistakes. If something happens, we're only human, we learn from that and if we need to apologise for something that we've done, we will do it but 9 times out of 10, we do it well, and we are normally recognised for doing it well and a lot of organisations or individuals would come to us because they know we are a safe space environment. We are a trusted organisation.

Interviewer: So do you think in terms of developing projects that's changed from when you were with the YWCA?

Interviewee: I think it's changed, we've got a lot more structure now, a lot more policies as well, which is a good thing, and I think as a team, we're more connected, and we're more supportive of each other.

Interviewee: Not that we weren't supportive back then, but I'm saying everyone knows what everyone's doing, because we have team meetings. We didn't have proper team meetings then, so a whole staff team meeting, and that kind of... When I first started way back [laughing] in 2008, we'd have team meetings, but it was like a quick update on what everybody was doing. It was normally the director at the time, kind of saying, or the manager, oh yeah, we should be doing that, we should be doing that. It was very that sort of thing, whereas now, totally changed. The dynamic of the organisation has changed completely. It's more of a supportive organisation. I feel, as a member of staff, I feel supported, and I feel listened to. If I've got a problem, I can go to my line manager, I can go to the higher up if I need to. So yeah, I feel we've got a good CEO in place that recognises we are women, we have needs, so we need to be listened to if we have an issue and stuff like that, and just being supportive and doing the best for the organisation and the team. So yeah, it's a big change.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the organisation now is a feminist organisation?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: And would you say that was the case in the past?

Interviewee: I think in the past, when I first started, it was trying to be. It wasn't completely obvious, to be fair. We didn't put out that we were a feminist organisation. We were just YWCA Glasgow, or YWCA Scotland, I think now, we're more recognised as a feminist organisation because we say that's what we are. We are recognised as a feminist organisation. We use a feminist lens to look at all of the work that we do. So yeah, I think now, we are more recognised as a feminist organisation.

Interviewer: If you don't mind me asking, on a personal level, how does working with a feminist organisation impact you generally?

Interviewee: I love it [laughing] cos yeah, it's all the beliefs that I have, and I can be open with what I believe in, and we all do, and we all share things and if we hear something really negative, this is horrible, or ridiculous, or whatever, we'll share that on Teams. We have a Teams channel, which is really good, so staff can share different things. We also share good things, and funny things as well like, I've just bought this cake [laughing] or something stupid happened, and I think, as a team you need that, and it's good for morale. It keeps you going, like we can all be really busy. Oh, I haven't got time, and then you see something funny on Teams, and you're like, [laughing] it's like, yeah, just go, back to reality again.

Interviewer: So what is it about the organisation that you think makes it feminist?

Interviewee: I think just a lot of the topics that we're covering, and also the way that we project ourselves on social media, online, like on our website, you know, and encouraging young women to have a voice. You know, having a safe space environment. It's just that everything we do is framed around feminism, so looking through a feminist lens and we encourage young women and girls to have a voice.

Interviewer: Brilliant. So what do you, what impact do you think you've achieved?

Interviewee: Well, I hope that I have reacted in a positive way, and given young women a space to thrive, to learn and grow, and yeah, to boost their confidence, self-esteem, and I can see that when we're delivering our programmes. So, for example, we'll work with a group of young women, maybe it's 12 young women, some of them might know each other, some of them might not, you might have a couple in there that are like really knew, they might even be new to in Scotland or Glasgow. Their self-esteem is like, is really low, their confidence is really low, its like, they don't know anyone, they'll sit, you know, maybe just at the side of the room or just in the group, but be really silent, and they may take a little bit of time, maybe a couple of weeks, to kind of say anything. So that's why it's really good to do the icebreaker activities and get people to know people and have no judgement between everyone, we do group agreements at the beginning, where everyone kind of agrees on what should be expected by everybody, and I think, you know, just seeing that kind of positive change from when somebody starts like that, then by the end, it's a 10-week programme, or even in the middle of that programme, you'll see them talking to people, making positive relationships, you know, new friendships. They're coming out of their shell a little bit, out of their comfort zone maybe. Might be somebody, you know, we work with a lot of people you know, they've got maybe kind of anxiety, depression, have low days where they're just like, no, I don't want to be like I don't want to be talking to anyone, and that's fine because people will respect that in the group, and there may be other people that have got that, so they can kind of connect to that person as well and talk about that. So yeah, I feel like by the end of the programme, everybody's got a smile on their face, they come away with an achievement, they've completed something and also we'll give them support and guidance to move on to something positive as well. We'll give them volunteering opportunities, we'll give them support to kind of move on to somewhere else. So yeah.

Interviewer: So do you have a favourite or like a memorable project that you've done?

Interviewee: I'd say Empowering Pathways because that's like one I've done for a long time and I've seen it change and it's basically like, the 'Its Your Glasgow' part of it, I kind of developed that, it did exist a long time ago but it was very, very different. So I designed it and developed it into something else which has changed again over the years but that was my baby and I've seen that change. So I'd say Empowering Pathways as it is now, that's the programme that really I kind of have created a lot of it, a lot of content and stuff. So that's one of the things I would say was really, like a good memory for me to see, also not just the programme itself but the participants. Like I can still remember every group. Like from the first group to the recent groups, like everybody.

Interviewer: Is that a big thing for you working with the people?

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm a people person and I love seeing somebody thrive like somebody that I can just give a little bit of hope, a little bit of cheer into their life, and even making them smile for the first time in a long time.

Interviewer: That's brilliant. So I guess just to maybe, back a wee bit, your title now, you're the Learning Engagement Coordinator, has that been a big change from the role that you had when it was YWCA to now, was that just a re-titling or what's been the change?

Interviewee: There has been a bit of difference in terms of like the women that we work with, so now obviously it's just young women and girls and also boys in primary schools and that's kind of changed a lot since when I first started and we were working with just 16 to... So that's kind of changed a lot and the role changes have changed so my role name has changed about five times since I've been here but what I'm doing as a facilitator I've always had facilitation skills but where I am now they've grown so I've had opportunities for training which is really good that's another positive about our organisation they'll allow you to try and get as much training opportunities as you can we look for free training obviously but sometimes if we have budget you know, say we've got this budget for training you know, put you forward for opportunities so I think that's a really good thing about my teaching as well and that's something that's really different now to when I first started so, yeah.

Interviewer: So is there any projects that the organisation did previously when it was just Glasgow and then moved to Scotland that you didn't want to pick back up where you think there's a need for?

Interviewee: No, I mean my mind's kind of changed over the years like when we kind of like in the Glasgow centre and maybe like just trying to find our own place it was like thinking about like oh it's a shame we've not got like a creche anymore, or a shame we've not got like budget for child care or whatever but we have like we had an example of where we had a bit of budget for child care on one of our young women's pride projects so that was a project we worked with we developed four workshops over the year went out to different organisations and did different workshops and we had one in Scotstoun that had a creche area and we thought great got a creche area we'll hire out the creche area we used a mobile creche and it was the girls that I spoke with earlier on the young women that sat at the room creche that used to be in our after school care [laughing]. So we actually used them to come in and deliver their mobile creche within the creche facilities put that on advertise it out to the young women that were doing it we had an uptake of two women that were bringing three children we thought right okay it's not much but it's something. On the day only one child [laughing]. So, yeah it's a good thing if you've got it but if it's not fully used you know is it a waste [laughing].

Interviewer: Are there any other notable projects that you've talked about the empower one, the one with the schools the young women thrive, are there any other notable ones that you've enjoyed working on?

Interviewee: I've loved all our programmes. They're all different as well they're all obviously working through a feminist lens and we've got working with young women and change but talking of change one of the newest ones that I've really liked working on is Young Women Change Makers and I'm still working on that project now. So that is a fairly new project. We had some funding to allow a group of 12 young women to co-design a workshop, and it's around human rights for young women. So looking at that, they were looking at the

background of what human rights is and what are their rights as young women, and looking at campaigning as well. So they took that and done a lot of research about it, did some collaging activities as well, and they developed a programme for a workshop for us to take out to the community. So that is in development. So as part of my role, I'm developing that, and I'll have support from our new programmes worker as well to further develop that into session plans. So the final thing will have session plans, slides, and a programme ready to go to the community. We're also working with a freelance artist, digital artist. So as part of that, they've not only created a workshop, but they've created a digital resource. So that will be on our website, and that will be like a toolkit. So it will be an offering for anyone that wants to use that.

Interviewer: In terms of developing projects, how does that kind of work, does that come from feedback from communities, from funding opportunities? How do you decide what area of scope gets funded?

Interviewee: So normally we look at what kind of funding is out there. I mean, that's not my role, but yeah, we're looking for funding. So we go for the funding, and then we'll have something in mind maybe that we could do. So maybe it's to develop a new programme around women's rights, or something completely different but it's always around young women and a feminist focus. So yeah, so it's normally not my decision to decide what funding we're going for or what the programme's going to be, although we will have kind of input, like a say, basically, as a team to like, you know, things that we think would fit in well, or what works well. So yeah, so that's like when we're looking at where, once we've got the funding, and we've got the fund application successful, we really look at what we've said on our funding application, and that's how we put together a session plan. So we put together a programme, so that includes session plans, PowerPoint slides, and then advertising. So we'd use comms to put out a post on socials, so that might go out like three or four times, like staggered, to get promotion. We'd also promote through, well I would promote through my contacts, like emails, and further contacts as well, networking. So there's a lot involved in like, getting a programme out there in the first place, and then recruiting for a programme.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. How long would you say, like the different stages takes before, you know, seeing the initial funding application to the project being completed and delivered?

Interviewee: It depends on timescales. So it depends on how long we've put aside, or how long we've said we were going to do something. So like for the younger and Changemakers one, it's like, we'd said in the application it would start in November. So we had to really make sure that we had some steps put in place already before that point. So we then sit down as a team, so it depends on like what team the funding's for, what the project is, you know, what team's going to develop that. So like if it was our team, we would sit down as a team and go through dates, put in dates in the calendar, say okay, like put a side date here for planning, put a side date here for the start of the programme. We'll go out and do pilots here, whatever. So our calendar, you could have stuff planned the whole year and we love to plan in advance because then you know what's coming and you know what to expect.

Interviewer: Is the way that projects are developed and delivered, is that different with YWM versus when it was Glasgow or Scotland?

Interviewee: It's very similar, but I would say communication with the team is probably improved and also the way in which, where we report as well, like as coordinator and I'll have maybe an opportunity to feed into reports.

Interviewer: I did have another question that's totally gone. Yeah, that would be good, I'll take a wee break now if that's okay?

Interviewee: Yeah, that's okay [laughing].

Interviewer: So we were talking before about the community projects and we were talking about the Empowering Pathway one, so how did that kind of come about?

Interviewee: Okay, so originally Empowering Pathways was like separate modules. So it didn't become a whole programme until we kind of moved to the Glasgow Centre at Well Park. So when we were in Charing Cross, we used to like deliver them as separate programmes. So I was, I developed a lot of the programmes like individually. So It's Your Glasgow was a stand-alone programme. It's Your Parliament was a stand-alone programme. 'Life Books' was a stand-alone programme. I didn't do a lot with the 'Life Books' one. That was my colleague, Angela. So she was the Women's Capacity Officer way back in Glasgow YWCA. She did a lot kind of Lifebook stuff and scrapbooking and came after that a little bit. We called it scrapbooking. We did a lot of scrapbooking. Well, she did [laughing]. Workshops and programmes and then it kind of became 'Life Books'. So I think at that time it was just called scrapbooking and then it became 'Life Books' further on down the line and then when we moved to the Well Park Centre, we had put an application to develop Empowering Pathways. So that's when that came about. So Empowering Pathways was then designed with all of those modules, or workshops at the time, programmes. We kind of changed them to modules. So there would be modules of a bigger programme called Empowering Pathways, which would also include now Empowering Women. So Empowering Women would be one module, then 'Life Books', then 'It's Your Glasgow', then 'It's Your Parliament' and then within the centre, the in-house ones, we'd have 'Next Steps' as well, which is a two day programme looking at progression, advice and support.

Interviewer: In terms of follow-on, so the women that come through these programmes or the schools and things like that, do you get any kind of follow-on from them? What they've gone on to do? Have they gone on to either come back to the programmes or anything like that?

Interviewee: Yeah, so a lot of them will contact us to say what they're doing, or we might see them come up to our programmes, or we'll see them when we're out and about in different places. So for example, I go to networking meetings and I'll see people, so one at the Central and West Integration Network, one of our young women is volunteering there with Food Hub. So that was good to see her there, and she was like, I wouldn't have been able to do this if I hadn't done Empowering Pathways, because it's given me the confidence and stuff to move on. So, yeah, and found out about the Food Hub through us as well, I'd

given her that information whilst she was doing Empowering Pathways, so that type of thing. Also, some women will contact you for references, so references for like going to college or volunteering opportunities elsewhere, or even job opportunities. We can't give a full reference, we can give a character reference. But yeah, so we'll know then what they're moving on to as well, so whether that's into employment or other opportunities, volunteering or college or whatever, or uni.

Interviewer: So kind of a little bit more about your involvement, so what have you sort of learned, or gained? Because you've been involved for a really long time, what have you gained from it?

Interviewee: What have I gained from it? Oh, I think a lot. I think it's helped with my facilitation skills, like as a facilitator, I've grown more confident in that. I've had training opportunities to help with that, so that's kind of what I've learned from it, learning new skills and building on my existing skills. Also, meeting new people, so whether that's staff members, whether that's volunteers, whether that's the young women we're working with. Also culturally, learning about different cultures, so we have lots of people from all over the world come to do our programmes, so you learn a lot about different cultures and working with also different people from different backgrounds as well. It's a big eye-opener. You know, I wouldn't have known half of the stuff that I know now from when I first started.

Interviewer: Are there any experiences that you've had, either personally or professionally or anything like that, that you don't think you would have got had you not been involved in the Young Women's Movement?

Interviewee: Definitely, yeah. Probably just all the training opportunities, knowing more about feminism. I was kind of an introverted feminist, but I know a lot more about it now, and just the type of work we do, and working with the young women, kind of learning from them, because you always learn from people that are doing the courses that we have in the programme every day. Whether that's something from a new language, or whether that's something that you didn't know about, like a new skill or a new fact, it's something that you learn.

Interviewer: Did you think that you would still be involved at this point in your life when you first joined as a volunteer?

Interviewee: No, no way. It wasn't there because at that time when I was a volunteer, obviously I loved what I was doing, but I didn't in my wildest dreams think I would be here this long [laughing] and especially like working and the work that I'm doing, because at that point it was just admin that I was focussing on, but then to have the opportunities obviously to get into project work and being, you know, like Life-long Learning Officer, Programmes Coordinator.

Interviewer: So, again this is maybe jumping back a little bit, but you talked about the development of the pathways and things like that, and the staff involvement. Is that something that you did kind of anticipate from the beginning, how much freedom you've had with the development?

Interviewee: No, because at the beginning we didn't have as much freedom as we do now with development and stuff, and I think because my role has probably changed a lot and I've got a lot more opportunities, a lot more knowledgeable, and I've kind of gone up the scale, I suppose, from like volunteer to worker to, you know, the role I'm in now as an engagement coordinator [laughing].

Interviewer: So what do you think is your greatest achievement at the Young Women's Movement, either on a personal level or kind of as an organisation, what are you most proud of?

Interviewee: I think, obviously, just giving the young women that we work with, the confidence, self-esteem to move on and do something else with their life. So, helping them be a leader in their own life as well and moving on to good things. I love seeing something that's said, you know, like, oh, now I know what I'm doing. Now I know I know that I can do this. Like, I wouldn't have been able to do this if I hadn't done that. Or just seeing them actually, like, doing different things. So, like, we've got people that have gone on to, like, advisory panels or advisory collective or, you know, volunteering a different role or got a job somewhere, and their like, oh, you know, I couldn't do that and this and this and this. We had a young woman that I worked with quite a long time ago when we were still YWCA Scotland and it was in the Glasgow Centre, she was a new Scot when she came here. It's like she knew nobody. It was just her and her young son. And she wanted to be a pilot, and had kind of liked the background of it, like, before, like, in her own country but she didn't have the opportunity to get into anything. So, she kind of put it on the back burner. Here, she had to start all over again. She had to learn the language. She had to, like, go to college. She had to get confidence and meet people and get connections and then, I got her in contact, like, got on to a college course. So, she managed to get a college course in aviation, [laughing], did that. Also, then, while she was there, got a contact to volunteer with, I think it was a radio station, and they had somebody in contact, like, learning about, learning how to pilot. So, she is now a pilot. [Laughing]. Yeah and while she was doing that, got her status in between time. So, she's now, like, a full refugee with status. Met a lot of people. Made a lot of friends. Has the confidence, and that, I think, seeing somebody like that, and she actually phoned me on my work mobile to say, thank you so much. You know, if it wasn't for you being there for me, if it wasn't for your organisation, if it wasn't for the support, I would not have been able to do this. So, I just think something like that makes you feel proud and it makes you feel as though you've helped them and helped them feel proud of themselves as well... And bring joy to their life.

Interviewer: That's brilliant. So, what would you like the future of the organisation to look like? Either a realistic point of view, or sort of pie in the sky, you know, what you want to do?

Interviewee: I think I would love it to continue doing what it's doing, but also doing a lot more. So, I think getting out to a wider area. Like, some of our programmes are restricted, obviously, for funding but I think, like, taking maybe, like, our Empowerment Pathways, Young Women's Changemakers, I can go, like, in the further afield but for Empowering Pathways, or other new programmes that get developed, like, work Scotland-wide. So, I

think all of our programmes, fund independent, should be Scotland-wide and, yeah, just getting out there more. Doing a lot. Just getting out, like, I suppose, knowing of everyone, like, the whole world needs to know about the Young Women's Movement, what we're doing and I think the more connections we can make, and the more networking, and the more followers we can get, obviously, because we have a lot but, yeah, just getting more, kind of, like, outreach connections, and moving forward, and getting the word out there that, you know, we are the Young Women's Movement, this is what we do. We are the National Women Movement for Change for Young Women and Girls in Scotland. So, yeah.

Interviewer: The last question I've got, and it's a very general one, is there anything, like, I suppose, like, one moment, or a memory, or anything that you want to record in the archive of your Young Women's Movement?

Interviewee: Really, just to say, like, I am really grateful that I've had this opportunity to be a member of the team, and to still be working for the Young Women's Movement at this time, and at my time of life [laughing] and I'm not going anywhere soon, so I intend to be staying here until I retire, hopefully, funding reliant, but, yeah, I want to see a lot more growth, I want to see a lot more change, I want to see young women engaging with us, and just giving them the opportunity, the voice, and a safe space environment to thrive and make change. I've also got a couple of other things I want to show you. So, whilst I've been at Women's Movement, YWCA Scotland [laughing] I've done a couple of, like, different fundraising things, so, like, I've got a couple of medals from the 10Ks that I did and we also did the Kilt Walk last year. I was a bit of a chicken, I only did the wee wander, because I thought, I am not walking, like, all that way to do the bigger one and I'm glad I didn't, because other people, other staff members did, and they regretted it but, look, made a lot of money.

Interviewer: Are those things that you would have got involved in, like...

Interviewee: Without?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Probably not because I would have... Although I probably would have thought about it, and gone, like, oh, that would be good to do, I probably wouldn't have had the bottle to do it. I think, if you're doing it with other people, like, you know, so obviously there was, like, other team members doing it.

Interviewer: So you...

Interviewee: Yeah, getting that...

Interviewer: You've been pushed to, like, expand your confidence, and do things as well as you normally would.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it's been good for my well-being, because it's, like, it's pushed me out of my comfort zone. Many times I've been pushed out of my comfort zone within this organisation [laughing] but I love it, and I love change and I now can adapt. I think that's

something that I've all learnt, something that I have kind of built on, is having the skill and the ability and the flexibility to change, to either change a programme, change... Get out of my comfort zone, add to your skills, whatever it is. So, like, just, like, having that ability to do that, I think that's grown with me in time and, yeah, like, if I spoke to myself, like, way back when I started as a volunteer, I'd say, like, you know, you can do this, you can do that, and I'd be like, I can't but now, me now, yeah, it's like, I've done a lot, but it wouldn't have been possible if I hadn't had the opportunity to work here. So, this one here is, this was the first one, so, Women's 10K in 2010, which was on the Sunday, the 9th of May in 2010. So, I did that first 10K, and we did that when we were still in Charing Cross as part of WCA Glasgow. So, we did this for a fundraiser for funds for each of our teams. So, this was for the lifelong learning team. So, all the funds that I raised for that kind of went into our teams, so different people did it for different teams and that was very challenging. It was the first time I'd ever done anything like it, so I was kind of, like, jogging around a little bit and, like, pushing my miles... Like, I'd have, like, kind of a key point, so I'd say, like, right, okay, that bit there in front of me, I can see that flag, that's where I've got to go. So, just keep going until you get to that bit. So, it was hard going, but it was, when I got to the end, it was so great because it was something like, yeah, I've done it. Like, yeah, and then you get your medal and stuff like that, so that was really good. So, then, glutton for punishment [laughing] did it again the following year. So, 2011, Sunday, the 8th of May, we did it again. So, yeah, so that's another one.

Interviewer: Didn't even give you a chance to forget the last year...

Interviewee: Yeah. I thought, no, I could probably do it better this time. But, yeah, it was, again, it was, like, hard going, but I did it. So, yeah.

Interviewer: Just, how many, so you said that you all did it for fundraising for your specific teams. How many other teams were there? What were their sort of areas?

Interviewee: So, there was, like, team members that did it for, like, for the creche. So, like, to help with buying, like, toys and stuff like that, and resources and things like that. So, all the money raised kind of went to, like, different teams for resources and stuff. Not just for programme delivery, but the resources that we needed for our teams and, who else? Yeah, and there was, like, core teams. So, different people would, like, fundraise and different pots of money would go to those different things. Yeah. Whereas, the second year we did it, we did it more of, like, an overall. So, like, all money raised kind of went to whatever place.

Interviewer: And, have you got any plans for anything else you're going to do next year kilt walk, sky diving?

Interviewee: Not skydiving. No, not on your life [laughing]. No, I can't see myself doing skydiving. Yeah. I would probably do more walks. I'm trying to get a bit more healthy again. So, like, walking. I love walking. So, maybe more walks hill walking, stuff like that. So, yeah. So, if that kind of came up, I'd probably do a bit more stuff like that but, yeah. I'm always pushed out my comfort zone, as I've mentioned. So, like, you never know. Bungee jumping or something like that, nah.

Interviewer: Do you do, like, as a team, you don't have a main office space, so do you do kind of specific things for team building activities or things like that?

Interviewee: Yeah, this organisation is so good for team building and, like, just support in general. So, our events lead, Elena, so, she's in charge of kind of, like, putting on all the events throughout the year, which includes staff team building events and stuff like that. So, we have, like, days where we'll have like one day a year where we'll just get together as a team and it'll be just down time. So, we've done a Rage Room. Well, I've done it twice [laughing]. It's now closed, which is a shame but it was, yeah, the first time we went was really good. The second time was good as well. We didn't have as much there and I guess through COVID and that, it's kind of struggled a bit and they struggled to get donations of things to smash up [laughing]. The first time we went was really good because it's, like, all of the stress and frustrations you've got, like, throughout the year. You can just let it all out in that Rage Room. Smash that TV. Smash the plates against walls or whatever. Like, you go in as, like, two people would go in at a time and the others, like, watch you and they're all encouraging you and stuff. So, it was really good. You have to wear all the equipment. So, we've done that. We've done, like, well, not as much pottery as in making it, but painting it. Like, painting the pottery. So, painting cups and stuff like that. We've done that. and what else have we done? The last one we did was making a little, like, tray, and, like, decorating with flowers and stuff like that. Getting it kind of, like, heated on and stuff. Yeah, that was quite cool. So, yeah, and we do karaoke [laughing]. Yeah, that's it as well. So, yeah. So, a lot of things like that. So, downtime and time together and then we also have, like, staff development weekends and stuff like that as well if we've got funding for it. So, yeah.

Interviewer: So, would you say that you are, I know, like, when it comes to, like, programme development, you are, you know, you have that. Would you say, like, as a, in terms of, like, your overall strategic development as a team, you are quite involved in that as well?

Interviewee: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Definitely. Mm-hmm. Yeah and I think, you know, our organisation, it does, it encourages development and opportunities and it's good at, like, helping us to kind of be who we want to be or, you know, supporting different things. So, like, if we say, oh, I'd love to do this training or whatever, or I'd love to have the opportunity to do this, it's not always possible, obviously, if we've not got funding or if it doesn't fit within what we're doing. So, obviously, if it's something that doesn't fit with our organisation, like, you know, if I said, like, oh, I want to go skydiving just for the sake of it, like, I don't know, what does that have to do with us? [Laughing] but, yeah, so it's got to be, obviously, within line with what we're doing, within our work but if it's something that fits within our work, we can, like, ask if we've got the capacity to do anything like that. Yeah. That's fine. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: I think that's all from me, so thank you for your time. It's been really good.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's probably loads I've missed.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, there's probably loads that we've not asked about.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: But it's actually interesting to kind of, how long you've been involved in the different generations and the consistency within that. I think that's been the kind of, you know, the consistency has to be the core, kind of, aim to that, isn't it? Outreach and projects and things like that.

Interviewee: Yeah. That's it. Yeah. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Thanks so much.

Interviewee: You're welcome.