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Audio quality: Great

Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: Unable to decipher = (ia + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** = (ph + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode).

Moderator: It's Monday the 16 December and I'm with Joyce Kallevik, the National Director of WISH, the only user-led national charity for women's mental health working in prisons, hospitals and the community. Joyce is sharing her experience with working in the women's voluntary and community sector and campaigning for women's rights for the sisters doing it, for themselves. Joyce, if you can begin by sharing with us, what were the influences that brought you to work in the voluntary sector?

Joyce Kallevik: Well, I'm from a strong working-class Liverpool community, and I've always had a passion to promote a more equal society and campaign against injustice. So I started working in the voluntary sector in, let me see, it was just after my children were born, about 1989 and really I just went with the flow. I had a small research and consultancy agency, it was called ERAS then, Evaluation, Research, Advisory Service and it was about the time of care in the community, when monitoring and evaluation were the buzzwords. I'd done business and marketing, and my master's was in social research methods. I had two small children and I'd moved from Oxford to Bristol, and I wanted to work. I would've been a terrible mother if I hadn't of worked and so I set up a business from my home, which had an extra floor for an office and I just went with the flow of what was the key theme, and I started with HIV/AIDS and working, evaluating different projects.

Then I suppose my main theme has always been around disability, so working with then disability organisations, I've worked as a consultant with People First (Self Advocacy) for twenty years. I've worked in mental health, in physical impairment, hearing impairment and disability is my background because I parented both my parents. My mum had learning difficulties and my dad was quite strong, but he had his first stroke when I was eight. So I think that's what's given me my confidence, and independence, and ability to do things really because I had to. That was my background. So I had an affinity with disability and I know the discrimination is, and was, very widespread, and that actually that's the myth really of disabled people. Disabled people are just like everybody else. They've got the same potential and given the opportunity, they can reach that potential.

Moderator: What influenced you to move into the women's sector?

Joyce Kallevik: As part of my consultancy, it was about crisis management for organisations, fundraising, and so I was brought into WISH, and often I'd stay and be Acting Director, and then move onto another organisation and do the same. So I came in contact with WISH in 2001, 2002, when the organisation was in a terrible state, like a lot of voluntary sector organisations. So I did fundraising and I wasn't part of the structure, I was external, and then

the trustees asked me to stay as Acting Director and I felt I was coming home, and that's where I've stayed really. So it was the first paid job I'd ever had as part of an organisation. I'd always been a researcher or a consultant, and that was lovely to feel part of something as somebody with a lived experience of mental health and very similar to many of the women we work with. To be part of that movement to try and improve services, and the life chances of women and to give them power, and give them a voice, and that's always been the part of the job that I'm passionate about really, is working with the women because it's so inspirational. An organisation like WISH, a user-led organisation, women know that we know where they're coming from and what support they need, and how empowerment needs to be part of the process. It's not doing something for someone. It's supporting somebody to do something for themselves. So I actually don't work with the women now and I haven't for five years.

I was assaulted on the psychiatric ward by somebody who tried to break my neck and I was really unwell for a while, and I, and the organisation suffered as a result of that, but obviously I see women in the community link project. I used to do some advocacy work in a secure unit and that is so, so incredible to see how women-, you go on the ward and you're their one light of hope, and we do a gender specific advocacy service, which is proactive. So we're not just waiting for a phone call that never comes from women because they just deal with shit. They don't know it's a problem, they don't know it can be resolved. So that was very inspiring and I think that just working with the women gives you the inspiration and the passion to carry on.

Moderator: Even when you get your neck broken?

Joyce Kallevik: Even when I get my neck broken.

Moderator: One of the first, I suppose practical examples of helping women was the women's first refuge, set up by Erin Pizzey. Did that influence your decision-making at all?

Joyce Kallevik: No. I was a teenager in the '60s in Liverpool where everything and anything was possible: feminism, working class barriers being broken down, working class kids going to further education with grants. So I became very political, and also I think I personally wasn't like the other women of that era. I'm 68. That was in '68, '69, gender was not full on the scene sort of thing, but politics was. So I think that my actions have been more politically motivated and I know I'm a very strong woman, I'm confident in my decision-making, I'm very analytical and that's all through my own childhood experience that's given me those qualities, if you like. So it was weird really because I suppose I did-, and I also took male education options if you like, business, marketing and that's who I was, and I know that the other women in the circle didn't really relate to me very much, because they were partners of the people. (TC 00.10.00) I was quite ostracised really because, 'Who does she think she is?' Sort of thing. I'm very close friends with them, but it was a process really. So I really became more politically active. It was more around Greenham Common and being with women there, being more aware of women and then onwards through Thatcher, and the Miner's Strike. So I suppose really, it was just a greater political awareness really and it was around impairment and around disability. It wasn't really until I came to WISH that that was my own personal awakening because I think that I had been in denial about my own history as a child and

completely blocked that out. So it's hard then to engage with a movement that is profiling that if you like.

Moderator: Can you expand a little bit more on your awakening?

Joyce Kallevik: When I came to WISH?

Moderator: Yes.

Joyce Kallevik: Well, I suppose I felt incredibly at home with all of the women and they felt very at home with me, and WISH, it hadn't been a user-led organisation then, although there had been elements, but I made the structural constitutional changes for it to become a user-led organisation. I think the one thing that always struck me was that the world is full of policy claptrap. We did some groundbreaking research before I started, which went into the mainstream women's strategy for mental health. Actually, there were no resources behind it at all, and this had always been my sense when I was a researcher that people get all the glory, do the really satisfying work of the research, the discussions, the debate and then it just goes on a shelf. So I suppose my passion or my awakening was to realise that the women we work with deserve better, better from services basically, because that's the thing, no matter how much we, as WISH do or small charities, it's services that make or break them. Actually, for the women we work with, it breaks them because everything we do is then completely undermined by what happens in statutory services. It was just a farce into the mainstream. There was a conference, and all the mental health Trusts were supposed to have a women's lead, and we went to this conference and virtually everybody had been asked to be women's lead for a day. It wasn't taken seriously at all and nothing really much happened.

So what we wanted to do was to put that policy into practice and we got some funding from Comic Relief. It was called Policy Into Practice, Keeping on Track and was to work with secure units so that women could review the unit policies and see where they fell down in relation to gender, but with a name like that we couldn't get into the hospitals. They saw it as really threatening, giving women power, which is something I totally take for granted. So we had to change it to Voices, Actions, Services Together or something to get in. So I suppose the awakening was that I had had very similar background to the women we work with. I could've very easily been one of these women in hospital or in prison, that I had two things. I never really tell my story and I'm not really going into great detail now, but when my dad became ill I then was lent to somebody and it was a very abusive relationship. I was there for eight years, but I got through it and I knew there was no malice on the part of my parents. I knew it was just what had happened sort of thing, but the two things that saved me if you liked, was I had a GP, I don't know, in those days the surgery was in a terraced house. You went in and there would be twenty people sitting there and the last one in would say, 'You're after me.' So this was when I was about thirteen and he would sit and listen to me for an hour, an hour and a half. He knew my family, he called in to see them. I was on antidepressants and he listened and there was a teacher at school who similarly was aware of my circumstances, and was not intrusively supportive and he was there for me, sort of thing.

I suppose the thing that I knew was that if there's somebody there for you, it makes a big difference, and I was quite academic, so I had an education and therefore I could work. I could

be financially independent. So, what we want at WISH-, we do intensive support for women in crisis, that's not enough. So we're developing a project, because then it only keeps women in crisis. It doesn't really move them on and some women do, but a lot of women have an incredibly difficult time letting go and it's those women who have experienced injustice, if you like, at the hands of the state, the court, the prison, the police, who can't let it go. Not only had they injustice of their own experience, but also the injustice of services who didn't believe them or kicked them again sort of thing. So we've just developed a gender specific counselling module and we're piloting it with some funding from Hope and Grace, an American charitable giving organisation and then we have done some training and education work, but we want to get something going at the other end that maybe is a women's cooperative. They could never go into employment, even the real-world sort of thing, a lot of the women who haven't been able to move forward. So we want something that will be an end-to-end package if you like. So what inspired me is that these women are strong to be alive. I know how strong women are, but that shouldn't just be enough. We should be supporting them to build that strength to become real citizens, to become hopeful about life, to enjoy things, rather than going through day after day, absolute hell, reliving what's happened to them or being denigrated by services and the state.

Women just need to step into their power. They need to be not afraid to say what they want, say what they think. They are so used to accommodating, ducking and diving, not offending anybody, not wanting to (TC 00.20.00) tip the cart and so they're always in the shadow. I've got this great article from Good Housekeeping in the '50s about the role of women. What you must do when your husband gets home, and that's where it's all come from really and that's what's been fed. I'm not saying it's different for white middle class women, but they have had some, from my era anyway, they will have had some advantage that has enabled them to have an education or to feel less blighted by their gender or whatever. Working class women, bloody hell, they're absolutely immensely powerful, but they've just got to be encouraged and have the confidence to step into that power, and to speak their truth really, to tell their story. I've never told my story, even to people here. I blocked out those eight years and I've never been able to think about them and it was actually the assault which, obviously any trauma makes you resist previous traumas. So it's only then. So when I identified it in the women, I didn't know why. Well, I sort of did. I knew why it was, I could just say, 'Yes,' but I didn't really, fully understand why that was. So I think that that's our mission really, to help women step into their power and speak their truth.

Moderator: You've kind of touched on this a little bit, who inspired you and who inspires you now, and how do they do it and why?

Joyce Kallevik: I'm very independent. I'm very not influenced. What inspires me is just the strength of women. I don't know what inspires me. Liverpool inspires me. Liverpool is the place, their people aren't trodden down. I think everything is a class thing actually, across any of the equalities, but I suppose the person who most inspired me is my shamanic mentor. So I went to a women's shamanism school and did a shamanic course in shamanism and so being with those women, and that women who we saw ourselves as illumined warriors, but all the fantastic women. Music inspires me and poetry, but from my era it was mainly male poets or male singers, songwriters and the thing is, all my friends are men. All my very best friends

are men, so it's weird that I don't identify with being a woman. Do you know what I mean? For me, it's all about class basically.

Moderator: How would you describe your approach to leadership? Could you describe your leadership style?

Joyce Kallevik: Well, it's from the centre. It's very Taoist. It's about not being conspicuous, it's about leading, it's about allowing other people to lead and grow. I'm a strategic planner, so it's about being clear about what the aims and objectives are, and having proper plans in place to do that, and about supporting others. I haven't had this because as a consultant I was always outside of organisations. I'm more of a facilitator I think and I don't have a big presence really. I don't try to have a big presence. For me, within WISH, it's more about whether WISH has the profile, rather than me personally and I think that's a dilemma that people who've got a potential leadership role can get into. WISH is the electricity, we're all lightbulbs. I might be a bit of a stronger lightbulb if you like, but a lot of people in organisations, they think they're the electricity and they detract from the organisation. So I always say, 'Whatever decision you make, it's not about what you do personally, it's about how it will impact on WISH. So I'm probably more of a facilitator than a leader.

Moderator: Can you give an example of how you have in practice worked with a staff group and put WISH first, as opposed to any one individual?

Joyce Kallevik: Well I suppose WISH had campaigning routes with our research and then we deliver services. We work with women in the community and advocacy and I wanted to get WISH back into a campaigning mode really because regardless of the research, the policy, if nothing changes it's all just treading water really. So I think that one of the things that we've done is that we set up our women's mental health network. There was quite a lot of, 'What about the women who want to take our support away from the women? You're prioritising something else over what we give.' Actually, what we're trying to do is to ensure that we don't have to give so much and organisations like us, so that services can change. So we consulted women about what things they wanted. We had focus groups and we consulted women about what things they'd like to change and so they chose ten areas, and in the focus groups there were ten areas, and we've chosen two. One is to develop gender specific counselling from a trauma and informed perspective, and the other is to look at the role of male staff in prisons and what isn't appropriate for them to do, and we've now started that process of the pilots and working with the MOJ and now staff can see the value in that. The more you change, the less need there is for women to be dependent on support services that aren't there I suppose, and that's my passion really, is campaigning in change and I suppose the thing is, I don't identify with any gender. I'm very modern. I'm very Maggie Nelson. No, honestly, I don't. That is weird, isn't it? I don't think about gender as a differentiator because look at working class men as well, do you know what I mean? Look at lack of privilege generally.

Moderator: Thinking about leadership, do you think there's a difference between women's leadership to men's leadership?

Joyce Kallevik: Yes. Although, look at Boris and Jeremy. (TC 00.30.00) Well, I would imagine men are less consultative, they're more confident, they more lead from the front, they're more visible. I suppose they've made up their mind before taking action and they drive that forward. I think women know what they want, but often don't feel comfortable in driving that forward really because it's almost like, my issue would be you shouldn't have to become like a man to be a leader and to be successful. You should be able to do it in your own right as a woman, but it's about getting that balance really, that yin/yang balance because sometimes you just have to say, 'No you can't do that.' I've had to say that today, 'You cannot do that. It's in breach of our agreement. It might seem like a good idea, but you can't do it.' Well, people take their personal attributes as well into any sort of leadership or organisational role and women have been carers, and supporters. So there can be an unwillingness to engage in anything that doesn't have that element to it and I think that can prevent women from taking the command they need to, to really ensure that what needs to be done is done, and it's quite a fine line really. Obviously nobody wants to compromise their own personal beliefs or behaviours, but I think sometimes you do. You have to separate who you are as a person, from who you are in your organisational capacity and feel okay about it.

Moderator: What do you think are the specific characteristics of being a leader in the women's sector?

Joyce Kallevik: I think feeling part of the sector, being part of a network and knowing what's happening, but I think it's also a very dog-eat-dog world. Sometimes you think that we've shared things with people who've then gone off and taken them sort of thing. So say, what was the question again?

Moderator: It was, the specific characteristics of being a leader in the women's sector.

Joyce Kallevik: You've got to believe in yourself and you've got to believe in your cause really. My background is in user-led organisations per se, so I think you've got to have an insight into the work that you're doing and obviously having experience of that as well is incredibly important. I think planning is key to success and so knowing what your goals are, and knowing how you're going to get there is really important and not alienating yourself from your organisation as a women's organisation because I think it's treading the line really, between forcing things through and taking people with you. I think that's quite a fine balance and I think it's really hard, because you don't want to be autocratic as a leader, but there's got to be a common understanding,, and I think that is a really tricky issue to address.

Moderator: You've spoken about the issues that are dear to your heart. How do you think you have influenced change?

Joyce Kallevik: Well, it's hard. My consultancy changed, ERAS to Change Plus. So I think it's possibly easier to influence change from outside an organisation as a consultant to support an organisation to do that, for me any way, to do that. I think change is incredibly difficult, but the whole societal move around awareness. The move from mental health, gender specific, domestic violence and abuse, the whole joining together of those dots and it becoming one big movement and I think as an organisation you're part of that movement, but as a single organisation you've got to have your own goals, and I suppose the thing that's

important for me and for WISH is to put that policy into practice. I don't know, the walls of Buckingham Palace was all the research and policy, but actually how things changed. What has changed in women's mental health? I think there's more awareness of the role of violence and abuse, but actually it's no use just saying services need to be trauma informed because it's institutional change, and it's resistant, and people are being asked to change all the time. So you've really got to demonstrate that it's possible, that change has got to happen bit by bit and that's why we're taking this approach to the gender specific counselling, to looking at the role of male staff in female prisons. It's being there for the long haul basically and I just think it's so much easier to slip back into research and policy for people, and that's where the funding is. It's hard. We are still an unpopular cause, even though all the rhetoric around gender, violence, abuse, the power balance, we're still with funders an unpopular course, but there's a lot of funding out there for policy and research. There's not a lot of funding for change.

Moderator: How has your involvement in the women's sector impacted on you personally?

Joyce Kallevik: (TC 00.40.00) One of the things that's always been apparent in relation to WISH is that we straddle several sectors. We're a mental health organisation, so that's about disability, we're an advocacy organisation, and we're a women's organisation as well. So, to a certain extent, I was treasurer of NSUN, the National Survivor User Network, the National Women's Mental Health Organisation, I think, to a certain extent, that is impacted on by the fact that we do identify with mental health and therefore, have got a foot in two camps if you like. I think that whole sense of community, the telling stories, that feeling of having support from being involved with other organisations and partnerships is really important, but I also think that WISH is a bit also on the outskirts of things because we're user-led and the process is as important as the outcome. That makes us different from organisations who can just wham, bam, get things through, get things done and it's very hard in the women's sector. I think it's still hard. How people come together, it's fighting the patriarchy and not feeling compromised by it and I think the women's sector has so many different elements as well, and I think it would be great to have a sense of a more cohesive framework. I think that the grassroots women's organisations, just like the grassroots self-advocacy organisations are so important to women to have somewhere to go.

I think that the local services and support that women get from local organisations makes a difference between survival and not for a lot of women. Having the refuges, Women's Aid. So very strong at a grassroots level and I'm not sure how that comes together in a national profile really. What does a women's sector mean? What's the epitome of that profile? I think so many places are closing. I don't know what the figures are, but I know that the self-advocacy moment, like, 60% of all groups have closed. So they will be operating on a shoestring anyway, so it's just that final kick really in taking everything away. It's the same for all, it's not just women's, it's the same for all grassroots organisations. That's where it happens and that's where it's most difficult to sustain it I think. God, I hate to think what's going to happen now.

Moderator: Which brings us nicely onto achievements. In terms of WISH and the women's sector as a whole, how do you think it has influenced and changed women's structural position in the UK?

Joyce Kallevik: We work with a very specific group of women. So A, we have made huge, life changing differences to a lot of the women we work with either to enable them to move into a different space, or else to continue to support them. Women say, 'If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be here.' So there's that element, which I think is our most important contribution if you like, at a service delivery level. Then hopefully now we've got back into our campaigning roots we're going to be able to make a difference at that structural level. Honestly, sometimes when you go and speak, you could be talking about women, and you could be standing on the table with no clothes on, and they still wouldn't be taking any notice of you. It's so entrenched in our psyche, and in everybody's psyche, that women are worth less really, and therefore don't deserve the same attention. I don't know, at a structural level, so it would be through our campaigning and of course we put gender on the agenda and back in the late '90s and early 2000s it was WISH that did that, though I've got some details, which I probably can't share with you. We were ousted from our position if you like then, then we were excluded from the debate by a woman who was power-hungry. So, there's that, that we lost our position there and it's also, this is a bit meddle-y, but you've got to retain your integrity. You can't do things and not retain that integrity.

So there's another organisation, it's quite newly formed, that we've had a few clashes with because we've been excluded from the debate, which doesn't really make sense given that we've got a wealth of knowledge and experience. We were excluded from the women's mental health task force and not given any information about what was happening there. So the women's sector is on a spectrum if you like, really, and I think we've really got to be careful that we don't get drawn (TC 00.50.00) into these places like-, can I mention any names?

Moderator: It's going to be public. If you do mention-,

Joyce Kallevik: So what was I saying?

Moderator: I think we were talking about women's structural positions and moving on, what do you think are the greatest achievements of women's collective action?

Joyce Kallevik: Well, obviously completely raising the profile of the societal power imbalance I would say, and just keeping gender on the agenda basically, not going away, not giving up, but I think very often, at that position, there can be a temptation to be drawn into other people's agenda. So I think that it's important to feel part of that women's movement and to stay true to it really, and not to be drawn out in order to improve the position of the organisation. I think that once you start to get into that pecking order of women's organisations, then you lose the most important thing, is that we are a collective and we are one voice.

Moderator: What do you think still needs to be done?

Joyce Kallevik: Get rid of institutional sexism I suppose, simple as.

Moderator: Big ask.

Joyce Kallevik: Pardon?

Moderator: Big ask.

Joyce Kallevik: I know, but it's a process. Things have changed a lot. What still needs to be done? I think driving forward change. I think the balance between providing the much needed services for women who are at the very sharp end of societal pain if you like, and the need to carry on campaigning for change, but also not to profile it as campaigning as such because then that raises alarm bells, 'What are they trying to change?' Sort of thing, but just make it a reasonable ask basically. Actually, the research we've done about the role of male staff in prison, it's not going to be hard to change some of those things. Make structural change easy, not a command from above. Facilitate it and then show the benefit, because there are benefits to everyone - to women, and to staff and to the financial implications as well. If you've got better services, you're getting better value for money, and you're supporting women to have better life chances and opportunities, which is going to be less of a draw on the person. It's a win-win situation really, but I suppose that's from my perspective. It's not going to be from everyone's perspective.

Moderator: What are your thoughts on the future for women's rights?

Joyce Kallevik: (Silence 54.38-55.02) It's about the right to feel equal, the right to have an equal say, the right to be treated equally, the right to employment, the right to a fair wage, the right to respect for doing what you're doing, regardless if it's paid or not. I don't know. I think you've just got to speak up. I think there are different levels, isn't there really? There's supporting women to speak up for their rights. There's actually speaking up for women's rights when you see an injustice. Doing it, in the national part. It's difficult. I've never felt disadvantaged as a woman because I've always had a strong voice, and that makes it a bit difficult being part of this really, but having said that, I've just never, ever seen it and I've never been prepared to accept it either. So that is a bit weird, but look at some of our female politicians. We don't want to have to become like that to have power, but I suppose it's if we can't address the structural, then it's always going to be a fight. I think in order to do that, there's got to be a common understanding that women can retain those qualities, and characteristics, and it's different for everybody and be in a position of power, and not have to compromise on things, and not accept harassment, and be able to feel entitled to have, and not feel they've got to give something in return that they don't want to give basically.

I think it is about women stepping into their power, speaking their truth and feeling okay about it, and not being bothered about what people think about them basically because look at some people. Look at what's happening in politics now. Unbelievable that people can be saying those sorts of things. They don't give a toss, do they really? It's absolutely unbelievable, incredible, unacceptable, outright lies, but they don't care and I'm not saying that women should be like that. I think because they don't feel confident, it often comes over as weak, and apologetic, whereas really, it's got to come across as strong. This is what I think. I think obviously I'm an older woman, but possibly I'm not affected as much by other women of my generation, but we've got a stronger group of women coming through, but just hopefully they're not coming through on a male ticket. I suppose that's my concern really, but everybody's different, aren't they really, and in the end, man or woman, it's about integrity, equality, justice, compassion I think, and gender liquidity is becoming now more of a common term. So it's about embracing that really for everybody.

Moderator: Thank you. I've come to the end. If there's anything that you would like to add?

Joyce Kallevik: No, I don't think so.

Moderator: Thank you very much.