

Project: 'Queer Lives: Barriers from cradle to elderly care - An Oral History'

Respondent: Chrissy

Year of Birth: 1973

Age:

Connection to project: Local Knowledge

Date of Interview: 29 July 2024

Interviewer: Eleanor

Recording Agreement: Yes

Information & Consent: Yes

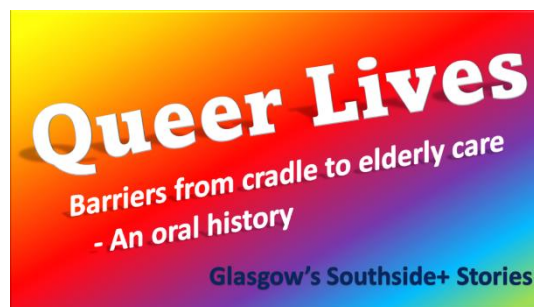
Photographic Images: Yes/ No (Number of:)

Length of Interview: 1.11.26

Location of Interview: Marie Trust Glasgow

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)

Glasgow's Southside+ Stories







Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.36	<i>Where were you born?</i>	
	"Glasgow."	00.37
00.38	<i>Where did you grow up?</i>	
	I live currently where I grew up in the Southside of Glasgow. Queens Park.	00.40-00.51
00.56-01.11	<i>We've used the term Queer in an attempt to be as inclusive as possible but we appreciate that not everybody is going to use that term to describe themselves. Is there a term you would prefer me to use?</i>	
	"It doesn't bother me. I don't have a problem with that."	01.12-01.28
01.41	<i>What are your preferred pronouns?</i>	
	"She/her"	01.42
01.50	<i>Would you mind talking about coming out as queer?</i>	
	<p>I knew I was trans, but I came out as a gay male aged 30 and lived as a gay male for 10 years, then at 40 had another coming out as trans. The trans coming out was far more difficult in terms of people were more accepting of coming out as a gay identity rather than a trans identity. I'm quite lucky I've got the same group of friends I've had for 30 years. And still have the same group of friends, quite accepting, but not everybody was on board as quickly as everybody else, not necessarily negative but struggled with it. I've known these people since I was 20. You don't transition in a bubble so I understood it was difficult for people. How you transition and how you put that across impacts a lot of people.</p> <p>Initially I told a couple of friends, I told my work colleagues and my work were actually very very good they were very supportive and allowed me to come up with a plan to inform the people that I supported. My employer has a simple dignity and respect at work policy that covers gay, trans, disabled, everyone is covered by that same dignity and respect policy."</p>	01.54-05.56
06.37	<i>Were there any barriers at work due to you being queer?</i>	
	"Unfortunately I've only been in this workplace since 2003 so it's difficult to know what it's like elsewhere. I've always said that transitioning in a mental health organisation is arguably different to transitioning in a factory. I mean no disrespect to factories, but it's different cultures. If the organisation I work for wasn't getting it right, I would have bigger questions. It seemed	06.40-07.29

	pretty natural for the organisation I worked for to get it right, they are pretty open and mental health is important to them. I don't know if that's the same across employers so it's difficult to judge what it is like in other workplaces."	
10.09	<i>How have people related to you as a trans woman?</i>	
	"This might seem strange but I've done better as a woman. As a trans woman I've actually gone up to a kind of management level and I run my own team, so it hasn't held me back in any way and at my workplace I'm also one of the Trade Union reps and have been for about 14 years, so I have quite a good relationship with my management as well. So I might consider it a barrier if I had to change my employment. If I was looking to change my employment I would look at the ethos of the place before considering it."	10.27-12.07
13.57	<i>How has your union worked for you?</i>	
	"Because I was part of the LGBT Committee, more so since I transitioned, that's the kind of work I focus on, I have a fairly decent employer, but most of the stuff I tend to do seems to be around campaigning, attending Prides, organising other events as part of a committee. Again being trans hasn't held me back, and I actually help trans allied training in Unison. I've done it maybe five or six times now and it tends to be branch officers that ask for the training because what the biggest thing people are afraid of is a fear of getting things wrong. So we do the trans allied training with one trans gender rep, it's not always me but particularly if it's in Glasgow, it's usually me."	14.06-15.20
20.16	<i>What are your thoughts for the future of queer people in the workplace?</i>	
	"I might have a bit overly optimistic viewpoint because of where I work. Increasingly I don't think being LGBT+ is necessarily a barrier to advancement in your career. I still like to think that hard work and maybe aptitude may have more to play in that and if you're not able to advance where you are my suggestion would be to be somewhere else but my presumption would not because you are LGBT+ and if it is because you're LGBT+, you're definitely in the wrong place. Why would you want to work for anyone who doesn't value who you are? Most places have equality policies, not because the law says they should have them, but because they think it's the right thing to do."	20.29-22.02
22.22	<i>Are there any barriers to healthcare for queer people?</i>	
	"For transgender people the main barrier is access to gender affirming treatment. When I transitioned I was referred in January 2013, my initial appointment was October 2013, so ten months. The current waiting list now is between five and six years and I believe if you go on to the Sandyford Website right now, they are currently seeing referrals from 2018 so we are actually talking closer to six years for an initial appointment. The project I work for see a surprising number for referrals for these people, sometimes up to seven percent referrals could be trans and a lot of it is self-harm, suicidal thoughts and that is linked to the inability to access treatment in a timely manner."	22.40-24.00
24.01	<i>Have you thought why this is?</i>	
	"Funding or lack of qualified specialists which are both interlinked. This could not be solved overnight because of the time it takes to train somebody. It's a longer term thing that needs investment. The starting point to that training is that you are a consultant urologist already. So they're not training anyone for that in a hurry."	24.15-25.10
30.00	<i>What do you remember about accessing healthcare before transitioning?</i>	

	<p>“For me it was no different. I am still with the same G.P. surgery since I was born. My G.P. I have actually known since he was newly qualified until he retired during Covid.”</p>	30.03-30.31
30.32	<p><i>Have you noticed any changes in healthcare?</i></p>	
	<p>“The biggest change I’ve noticed, I’m pretty lucky, I’m generally healthy. I’ve not had a day off sick in over six years. I’m not particularly stoic, I just genuinely don’t get sick. I’m now getting into a later part of my life, hitting 50 and I do have in the back of my head, is this where things start to go wrong? The main one is men in their 50s and all the prostrate stuff. I will have to ask for that and then rock up to a clinic and for the amusement factor I’m going full Mary Poppins for that. If I have to do it and I’m going to be the only female in that room, I’m going to do it properly.”</p>	30.36-32.06
32.09	<p><i>Do you have any support navigating that?</i></p>	
	<p>“Because of the transition thing and seeing so many different people, even just to get to see the surgeon you need two opinions and this still cracks me up because the only diagnosis I had was probable transsexual. I had to get a third opinion because what I wasn’t told was the two opinions need to be within six months of each other, so I’d had one, the second one took a bit longer, so that automatically meant the first one no longer counted. And I was very lucky, I got offered two cancellations so my second and third appointments were actually quite close together and then from there I got to see the surgeon. But nobody realises that you don’t just rock up and get to see the surgeon, you’ve got an initial appointment, two opinions. And then you get to see the surgeon. And even when you get to see the surgeon, it is not necessarily a done deal that you’re being offered surgery because the surgeon may look at things like your body mass index, medication you’re on, weight, all manner of things and they might not feel it’s appropriate to offer you surgery. There’s quite a lot of hoops to jump through.</p> <p>To a certain extent the gender identity clinic is quite service-user led but nobody tells you that. For example when I started on Estrogen it was quite a low dose, there’s no trigger for say you’ve been on that dose for 18 weeks we’re going to up your dose. They literally wait until you go back and say to them and nobody offered me a blocker. But then I said to them I want a Testosterone blocker and they just said very matter of fact, yes we can do that. If I hadn’t asked that wasn’t on the table. If you do ask, it was very very easy.”</p>	32.15-38.00
38.06-38.14	<p><i>Taking you back, you came out in your 30s, what was your education like?</i></p>	
	<p>“It was average, no different than anybody else. Up until I was 30, it was a fairly typical heterosexual type life. I was engaged at one point, all the stuff that everybody ticks at some point. Up until 30 I was determined I wasn’t going to be trans. I came from a Catholic background. I knew from a fairly young age, but I did not want to be, not necessarily that I thought about it every day but any time the thought came up it was pushed down as far as it could go until 30 and it came high kicking out of there all on its own.”</p>	38.19-39.40
39.50	<p><i>Did you have other queer friends?</i></p>	
	<p>“I’ve always known queer people actually because of clubbing. I was in my 20s in the ‘90s and that was quite good, I was exposed to a whole different group of people that you maybe didn’t meet at school or uni, in an environment that was fairly open, particularly The Arches nightclub. The Arches was one of the best nightclubs, it wasn’t specifically LGBT. That was more The Love Boutique, it was more a hedonistic environment where you met a lot of people but it didn’t do any harm.</p> <p>I will go to places that identify as a queer pub or queer club if that’s where we’re going. I do not choose to only go to what you might term as trans-</p>	39..51-42.12

	friendly places, I go wherever I like. I wasn't changing the way I live my life for anybody, all I've changed is the way I present. But I still go anywhere I want and I've been in some of the worst places I can imagine and the surprising thing is I don't really get any grief. I think you only get back what you give out. I don't have problems, and living in the Southside where I live, being LGBT is not an issue."	
42.13-44.00	Respondent talked about how the Southside had changed from when she was younger to how it is now. There are shops and businesses that are openly queer, couples walk down the street holding hands and there is a general acceptance of LGBT+ people.	
47.33	<i>Can I ask about socialising and queer spaces?</i>	
	"I think that's great if that's what you want to feel safe. For me I feel safe anywhere I want to go. It doesn't really matter to me where it is because I only presume I'm safe, because I don't have a presumption that I'm going to encounter difficulty. If I do, I can respond to that difficulty but I don't go anywhere really worrying about how I'll be received. I think part of that may be with being a bit older as well. But if you're just going about your business, and you're as if you like, ordinary as you can be, in general that's how people respond. And I frankly don't care because whether or not I'm trans-gender isn't paying any of their bills."	47.34-48.41
48.42	<i>Would you like to see more places that were specifically for queer people?</i>	
	"If there's a market for them, then they happen. If there's a space, then I do think things crop up. It's very hard to open specifically as a gay business."	48.50-49.28
50.51	<i>Are there any concerns you have about healthcare as you get older as a queer person?</i>	
	"In the union we have spoken about this quite a lot and there are campaigns about elder care in particular. If you're required to go into any kind of facility there are people that sometimes go back into the closet or maybe not as open about who they are. There are other things that concern me, for example if I had dementia and regressed to a point where I don't remember my transition, would my identity as it was be respected or would I be allowed to de-transition, because you don't know. I'd like to think no, but with the guarantee that the way I arrived there is respected and maintained. The dementia is separate if you like, because I didn't get to where I am without making a clear and conscious decision and I would expect that to be respected going on. So it is a concern if I had to go into a facility."	50.57-53.28
53.35	<i>Can you think of any positive examples in the U.K. of good healthcare for elderly queer people?</i>	
	"Just to offer respect and dignity. It shouldn't matter who and what you are. the same two things should apply. But in the case of LGBT+ people I am not as convinced that's a guaranteed outcome. Don't get me wrong, I don't have any evidence for that. It's a gut feeling."	53.48-54.37
57.37	<i>In terms of legislation and rights for queer people, has there has been any good progress in terms of legislation?</i>	
	"I think so yes. I'm not convinced that the Equality Act is going to survive in its current form. My concern with that is if people are okay with stripping back trans-gender rights, what's going to come next? Because once that ball starts rolling you're not stopping it and if it's okay to take away rights that I already have and have had since 2010, we're on a different path then and I might consider leaving the U.K. I'm also at a stage in life where I don't want to work to live, I'm relatively comfortable and if they were to remove trans-gender rights I don't think I would stay here. I'd probably go to Greece or Ireland. I don't understand how cross-parties can agree on legislation and a separate nation can veto this under Section 35 and people don't care until it	57.52-1.01.01

	affects them.”	
01.01.13	<i>Do you feel that trans-gender people are being used as a political football?</i>	
	“It is entirely being used as a political football and in the Telegraph and the Guardian and the Mail being amongst the worst culprits. So I generally refuse to have anything to do with them. There’s a good site, Trans Media Watch. Considering the percentage of trans-gender people in this country, the percentage of column inches the media have devoted to it is absolutely astounding.”	01.01.13 - 01.02.03
01.02.05	<i>What do you think of the media portrayal of queer people?</i>	
	“We actually do it in the trans allied training and the Daily Mail is the best example because there was six years apart, two stories used the same picture. In one is a couple with a son at primary school who presented as female, same photograph different article with an anti-trans spin but thinking because a few years had elapsed nobody would make the connection but people did make the connection. But we actually use that in trans ally training about how the media has manipulated things, particularly negatively. Even now trans celebrities are now a thing which is relatively good but not always good for them. India Willoughby has not been particularly well served by the media... I happen to be trans-gender, but first of all I am Glaswegian if there’s anything at all that identifies me, it’s that I’m a Glaswegian. Trans-gender is something that is, but it is not the be all and end all. It’s the same as heterosexual people don’t get up in the morning and say-what a fantastic day it is to be a man. You just don’t live like that. Am I glad that I transitioned, yes it made things hugely improved for me but it’s just a part of things. I don’t get up for a busy day of transexualing ahead.”	01.02.07 - 01.03.50
01.06.15	<i>I think that’s all of my questions, is there anything else that you’d like to add?</i>	
	“For me I think the world is not as bad a place for trans-gender people as the media would have you believe because I wouldn’t be able to go about my daily business as un-molested as I am if what the Daily Mail is selling you was true. From January up to now I have zero instances of negative experiences as a result of being trans-gender, I’m not saying that’s always been the case, there is always the occasional pockets of idiots pop up, but in general every day life is not too bad because people care as little about me being trans-gender as I care about what they’re up to. Trans-gender rights were doing really really well until heterosexual people decided to help us. We were actually zipping along quite well through consultations, gender recognition things going through, all of a sudden the weight of the heterosexual world is behind us, we need to help these poor trans-gender folk they’re languishing behind time to bring them into the 21 st century. Well thanks for all your help. Basically from activism and particularly from trade unions and the ping-pong in the media. The two sides of the media are diametrically opposed, nobody’s actually interested in what’s happening or how it affects anybody but the more that you actually shove something down somebody’s throat the more entrenched they get. You know, trans is bad and the other side, trans is good there’s nothing wrong with being trans. You’re never going to convince the two groups, any kind of movement forward is the one in the middle. So trans-gender rights were doing perfectly well until assistance came into it. This may be a controversial opinion but we were doing fine, my rights were intact, nobody was shouting about me at all, they just existed, no-one seemed to know they existed, but that was actually much better for me. But now I am a subject for debate because people took an interest and for me that’s a big round of applause. But the loudest voices in the debate how many of them are trans?	01.06.20 - 01.10.46

	<p>Maybe not the most active, but the loudest voices and that's the bit I really struggle with. About it being a political football. It's a distraction technique, look over there, look over there. I am hopeful that it will swing around, but I don't think it will be soon."</p>	
	<p>Thank you for sharing your memories with me.</p>	
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