






| <b>Project: 'Queer Lives: Barriers from cradle to elderly care - An Oral History'</b><br>Respondent: Charlotte<br>Year of Birth:<br>Age: 44<br>Connection to project: Local Knowledge<br>Date of Interview: 07/11/2024<br>Interviewer: Dr Sue Morrison<br>Recording Agreement: Yes/ No<br>Information & Consent: Yes/ No<br>Photographic Images: Yes/ No (Number of: )<br>Length of Interview: 39.34<br>Location of Interview: The Haven, Wick<br>Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) |  | Glasgow's Southside+ Stories<br> |  |
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| Time<br>(from:<br>mins/secs)  | Description  | Transcribed<br>Extract<br>(from- to:<br>mins/secs)   |  |
| 00.32   | <b>Where were you born?</b>  |  |  |
|   | I was born in Peterborough in England  | 00.39  |  |
| 00.40   | <b>Was that where you were brought up?</b>   |  |  |
|   | No, we ended up moving to Corby in Northamptonshire, which is classed as little Glasgow.   | 00.44-00.48  |  |
| 00.49   | <b>Where do you live now?</b>  |  |  |
|   | I live just outside Lybster in Caithness   | 00.50  |  |
| 01.06-01.15   | <b>I know that you are not part of the L.G.B.T. but you are an ally. Could you tell me why you are an ally?</b>  |  |  |
|   | I'm a big ally. I think I have kind of always been open to everything and very much live by the love is love and probably a naive level is felt like we don't know everybody in this world, we're probably never going to meet everybody in this world so how can we say that we are straight or maybe that's because I've always been with males in my past but that's not to say a female may come along and knock me off my feet and things could happen because I feel I'm a very open person generally and love people for who they are individually and I think to classify myself as straight but I'm kind of open to the fact that there may be somebody that I've never met that could change that. I mean I'm happy at my age don't get me wrong and I've got two beautiful children but I've kind of always lived by that. Especially when I was younger, that you don't know whose round the corner and from there I've had gay relatives that have come out that have been lesbian, bisexual, and then last year, no actually the year before, my son came out to me and last year he kind of said he was gay. He wanted to use the term bisexual as a softener that there might be a heterosexual relationship, I think that was his thought behind that. I would kind of be open to love, I don't see any way for it to be a negative thing, I see it as a positive thing that I've always been supportive of everybody inclusively across the board. | 01.16-03.28  |  |
| 03.34-03.40   | <b>You mentioned that you have relatives that are L.G.B.T.Q+ do you know anything about their experiences?</b>   |  |  |
|   | Not particularly. My husband's uncle was probably the first gay person that I knew and he was just accepted for what he was. sort of grew up in Glasgow in a Catholic family so I don't really know how it was for them, however they were married and had children, married to a woman initially and then came out later in life and as far as I'm aware his whole family were supportive.<br>My niece came out as bisexual a few years ago and again it was oh okay, you're still you. I think she had an easier experience and that was down in England we were in a bigger town and it was just very different there and it wasn't that long ago so  | 03.43-07.20  |  |

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|        | <p>things had progressed from when my uncle was going through it and she had a very supporting family and friends and a lot of friends within the community too. I think her experience was quite positive.</p> <p>My son came out gay and I feel that if we'd lived down where we were he might've had a more positive experience than what he's had up here and that's not against the people up here at all we have had lots of support but there are people that are negative about it and just not very nice about it and unfortunately those people seem to shout louder about it than those people who are supportive so you hear those voices more so I think that's been his experience of it although he's had a lot of support certainly from me and my husband and his brother and his auntie and his cousins and friends, there have been lots of voices that have not been so nice and that has been very emotional for him and actually caused him a lot of emotional harm. So his experience has not been nice, however down in England he would not have come out. He feels that living up here he felt more comfortable to do it because maybe because we were away from family he was able to come out as there are members of the family from the older generation who don't know because he's not sure how they'll take it. I think had we still lived down the road he might have kept it hidden a bit longer from us.</p>   |             |
| 07.25  | <b><i>How do you feel the difference is between rural areas and city areas?</i></b>  |             |
|        | <p>Cities are just generally more diverse anyway. It's quite eclectic itself. You have different races, you have different sexualities and orientations and it's just seems more acceptable because you've got this mixing pot whereas in rural communities, or in this rural community because this is the only one I can really reflect on, it's a very small community and everybody knows everybody, everyone knows everyone's business and there is a lot of positives to that, but that also means that you don't have any secrets as such, and if you do people find out and it gets round anyway, but I also feel up here we do feel like it's an island state, even detached from the likes of Inverness or even Sutherland, there doesn't seem to be much crossing of borders up here, it's very small and we keep ourselves to ourselves really up here.</p> <p>I just want to stress I'm not bad-mouthing up here, we love it up here, but it does feel a bit set back in time. I don't feel like it's caught up, up here, and we're being met with quite a lot of negativity in L.G.B.T. If I post anything on Facebook or any social media, there is always like I say, loud voices from those people that comment quite negative and quite openly. I feel like there's no shame in what they're saying and they don't seem to care that their families see it and this is like generations upon generations of this negativity that's being fed down to the children and I don't think you get that so much in a city or a bigger town because everyone knows somebody who is part of that community, it's not unusual, it's part of every day life although I'm not saying everyone is accepting by any means because you get people that are negative everywhere, but generally in these bigger places nearly everyone knows somebody who is part of that community so therefore it just seems like people are more accepting of it, whereas up here it still seems like it's still wrong, that it's still looked upon with shame and I think because of that, people are hiding it more up here, but then the flip side of it is my son sees that a little bit differently, but only within his own groups of friends.</p> | 7.33-10.40  |
| 10.46  | <b><i>Has his own group of friends been supportive of him?</i></b>   |             |
|        | <p>Yes his own friends certainly have and he does have support from other people in the community and he's at college now as he's stepped out of the school environment which was very negative and the college again is more accepting and he's got that bit more diversity within the college as people are finding their own feet and getting more confident and he's sort of slotted in there. Essentially he's gone into college and outed himself to everybody. He's gay, he's out there, and that's it, take it or leave it. He's got that kind of attitude there, whereas at school he very much hid it from everybody apart from his close friends who knew about it.</p>   | 10.54-11.40 |
| Q11.44 | <b><i>Are there any specific incidents that you know about the L.G.B.T+ community up here?</i></b>   |             |
|        | I can only really reflect on what's happened to my son. He was abused at school,   | 11.58-20.31 |

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|       | <p>sexually abused at school and it was just really down-played to the point where the police didn't want to know the school didn't want to know and it was just very much oh it's just boys being boys, just banter, it's just a game. I took him straight out of school and we went straight to the Police Station, they took a statement, explained what happened, it was classed as sexual abuse, they were lovely but it never went any further, they just basically spoke to the boy who'd done it who said it wasn't like my son said it was and just said it was a bit of fun, a bit of banter and that was it, they just told him not to do it again and that was before the summer holidays and during the summer holidays that same boy tried to chase him down from the town and he ended up having to call me to come and get him and he won't go up to the town by himself even now and that's two years on. At that point he hadn't come out as gay, although to me it wasn't a surprise, so I think it was at that point that people had kind of picked up on that, he'd already been called names and derogatory names towards gay people and he had come out to his friends at this point before he came out to me so I do believe that maybe it might have got out in the school anyway.</p> <p>That was the first incident and then we had the summer holidays and the first week back a friend of the person who had started twerking in front of his face and my son said sit down or I'm going to break your nose, which he shouldn't have done but he'd got to this point because they were all sort of laughing and joking amongst themselves and then went around and punched him in the face, not once, repeatedly, and my son's nose was broken. The best of this was and I can't believe I'm going to say this was it was actually an assembly where multiple children and teachers were witness and by a Police Officer who was in attendance. The boy who was punching him in the face had to get pulled off by the Policeman and shoved up against the wall. We tried to press charges but because the bone in his nose wasn't broken and it was cartilage damage, we were told it wasn't a police issue because it happened on the school grounds and it was the school's job to deal with it and the school's response to this was to take my son out of his classes so he wasn't in the same class as the boy who'd done it, and that was what we'd dealt with at school, it was horrific and the police didn't want to know and the school didn't want to know, it was all brushed under the carpet and we tried to take it further and no-one wanted to help and the boys just downplayed it. The Head Teacher actually rang me while I had my son off the school and he said if my son hadn't said, sit down or I'm going to break your nose, it wouldn't have got as bad as it was, that my son had escalated it and I ended up hanging up on the teacher. They just did not want to know.</p> <p>Then fast forward to this year as my son's doing his exams someone starts calling him a faggot and it was relentless. Initially he just kind of brushed it off and it was going on and on to the point where my son self-harmed at school. The marks were witnessed by a teacher who did ring me and expressed their concerns because they'd seen these marks on his arms and he came home and he point blank denied that it wasn't and that he'd fell over and scratched his hands and arms on the gravel and then he just shut down, point blank refused and then got quite aggressive with me, didn't want to talk about it, obviously quite emotional about everything then his dad came home and he spoke to him, had a look at them and he just broke down to my husband. He was just a mess, I think it was just years of everything. This was during exam times and his results didn't come back as he'd wanted or expected and at this point it was too late to turn it around. This whole thing has had an affect on his whole education.</p> <p>We went to the college drop-in and spoke to somebody there and within an hour we'd seen the financial support people, we'd seen the support team we were able to tell them everything that happened at school and within that hour they'd done more and set up more for my son than the high school had done the five/six years previously. From that point he felt valued and supported.</p> |             |
| 20.32 | <b><i>Have you noticed the difference in him?</i></b>   |             |
|       | <p>At college he's just so much more confident and just more himself. Like I said, he's came out as Hi I'm gay, that's how he introduced himself at college. He's being him now and not hiding himself there and his friends all know, he's made loads of new friends. He's a completely different person, he's just himself now.</p>   | 20.33-21.09 |

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| 21.10       | <b><i>As Mum, how are you?</i></b>   |             |
|             | <p>It's just horrible to go through that situation. When your child goes through anything like that, it's not you going through it, so you kind of go through it in one sense but then you're very aware that it must be impacting them too, so it impacts us both differently but then I feel everything he feels too on top of that.</p> <p>His younger brother is at high school now and although he doesn't have many issues there, I can't wait for him to leave school too and the best of it is they have an L.G.B.T. group there once a week and there's quite a lot of gay/lesbian teachers there, there's at least five or six of the L.G.B.T. community on the staff there which is why I don't understand why he didn't get the support, why they weren't up in arms with what had happened. The only time they tried to do something was when he got called a faggot and we were told the child was going to be kept out of the school during exam time and then that was all retracted because the child went above this teacher's head and complained. There was no offer of after care for my son. We were told that they would put him in touch with the school nurse because she's got experience in mental health but there's a long waiting list, but he went into a real depression and started crying which isn't my son at all, he's not a big crier and I looked privately for counselling only to find out that this counsellor actually does counselling at the high school, s there two or three times a week and deals with self harm, and deals with L.G.B.T.Q. issues but that wasn't even offered as an option for my son, they offered him the school nurse.</p> <p>Like I said, we went to the college and within an hour we'd seen the support team and they were like yes we can put this in place, put that in place, give you the educational and emotional support you need. There's just so much more there that he can access if he needs it, but touch wood, he's not needed it, that's just a healthier place</p>  | 21.11-25.22 |
| 25.43-25.51 | <b><i>Can you tell me the reason why you set up this organisation, how you came up with the name etc?</i></b>  |             |
|             | <p>This started after my son had self-harmed and during that period when we were looking for counselling and we were looking for any sort of groups that he could attend and meet people who were like him and didn't feel like he was on his own. The high school had an L.G.B.T.Q. group but it was led by the older members of the school which my son would've fell in and it was unfair that he would run that group ad he'd only just come out himself, he was just finding his feet he wasn't in a position to be guiding others younger than him when he didn't know his way himself, so we were kind of looking for places outwith the school and just in the area and there was nothing. There used to be one that was held in Thurso I think once a month on a Sunday, but that died a death because no-one was going to it. Other than that there was nothing. There was a lot of stuff online which we just kept getting directed to and other stuff down south, but up here, just nothing and as good as online stuff is, I wanted him to be able to make actual connections and friendships within his own peer group and not just someone on the internet that was hundreds of miles away and they were never going to meet up and get a coffee together. I wanted him to meet a group of friends up here that were part of the community or at least allies of the community that he could feel supported by. Like I said he does have a group of friends who are part of the community anyway but just sort of broaden his horizons a little bit especially since he was still at school and I wanted to show him that there was more to life than school.</p> <p>So I kind of looked into it a little bit and I spoke to my son and my husband initially about maybe setting up our own group and thoughts and what would we want from it. So I went to the Caithness Volunteer Group and asked can we do this, how do we go about it, what were the legalities of it. I'd never done anything like this before, I'm still very much learning months on, what we do, what the legalities are but Caithness Volunteer Group have been really helpful. They said we needed to get a committee together and a board and we could become a constituted group. So we've got a Chair and we've got a Secretary and Treasurer, so we're all official and we're hoping to get charity status, which is the next step going forward. Really it just started off as having this safe space for initially it was 16 - 19 year olds so those who were starting their journey into actual relationships and that sort of</p> | 25.53-34.38 |

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|       | <p>transition from school and all the issues that come with starting work and adult life. We really wanted to concentrate on that age group so we could help them know they're not on their own and they can become allies for each other, support each other and be resilient to what's out there and knowing that they're not on their own, that they can stand up for themselves and be a bit more confident in themselves. So it was really important for me to have this smaller age group and kind of focus on that initially however once I'd sort of put it out there and put feelers out, I had loads of people actually come forward to say they were out of that age bracket who also wanted something similar to that, they want a safe space and to meet like-minded people or to help those connections be made.</p> <p>So we do have the Stepping Out Group. Stepping Out came about because it was just about starting out on your journey and we have Stepping Out Together which is for the younger groups, that's about all being a group and being united, we're doing this together, we're not on our own. So that's why the name kind of came from. Now we hold weekly groups for the 16 - 19 year olds which is separate from the older groups and we hold that every week in The Haven. They can just meet, we have pool and we have dart boards and we have games and we have snacks and drinks but mainly we just sit in the lounge and just chat and have a good laugh and it's amazing how quickly relationships build and how confident people have become from coming here from being very quiet and reserved and there is a lovely atmosphere and during the week for the over '20s we just meet in the community cafe and have a coffee or lunch there and they just meet up and maybe go for a walk afterwards and that's more of a drop-in as and when people can go to that. We're hoping to eventually do one out Thurso way. We've quite a lot of Thurso members who don't want to travel especially in the evening during the winter. So we are hoping to branch out over Thurso way eventually. Once a month the 16 - 19 year olds group we do open that up we do open that up to the older age group as well and we call that a Mix-Up, all mixing together and we do try and have something going on that day so it's not just our normal sort of chat, we did a Halloween theme, we've got Christmas Craft Showcase where all of our L.G.B.T. members who do crafting are all going to bring something, like a Christmas shopping experience which is actually opened up to everyone who haven't been confident enough to come, but just want to be part of the community but because they've got an interest in crafts, they want to come along and that has actually encourages a few new members which is lovely. We are also hoping to support one of our members who is in Panto in Thurso December and we're hoping to go over as a group for that.</p> |             |
| 35.00 | <b><i>What are your hopes for the future of the queer community in the far North of Scotland</i></b>  |             |
|       | <p>I just want to be able to offer them a safe space here so they can gain confidence out in the open world. We have been hit with quite a few negative comments on our posts on social media, we've been called blasphemists, that we're trying to turn people to our agenda and I'm thinking it's 2024 and I've watched some videos and I'm thinking it's not changed, well it's certainly not changed up here and that's really upsetting. I want to be part of that change I really want everybody to just be able to be their authentic self. I think that's really sad that in this day and age people are still hiding part of who they are and not feeling comfortable to just be who they are. I can't get my head around why we're still in that place and I do feel it is worse up here than other places I've been to. This is my own experience in places I've been to. I cannot believe that people are nowadays still frightened to be themselves and dress how they want to, be flamboyant if they want to. There's so many people who are part of our group and I'm not even talking about my young ones who come here, I'm talking about the older generation that are members of our older group who have social anxiety at their age that they've lived and experienced and that should not be the case and I don't want that for the new generation coming through that's why I'm supporting everyone and I want the younger ones when they hit their '20s that they're empowered and that's all I want really, so we offer a safe space but we're certainly not about isolating them from the general public. It is about integrating with confidence and that is a gradual process. But that will come in our mix-ups and we're hoping to do some more public events for those that feel comfortable doing that and maybe doing some</p>   | 35.43-39.24 |

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|   | community work with other charities so we can show that we're here we're not going anywhere but we're still part of the bigger community. I just want people not to feel scared anymore and if they do feel scared they've got somewhere to go to and they don't feel alone and that we are here to listen, and to offer help and support. I'm doing a counselling course at the moment so that I do have that knowledge to be able to support them in the way that they deserve to be supported. |  |
| 39.25   | <b><i>Thank you so much Charlotte.</i></b>  |  |
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