



# Participation of Young Survivors in gender equality and gender based violence policy and practice in Scotland

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## Today's presentation

Political and policy context conducive to innovation

Participatory action research projects for policy change

- children and young people experiences & priorities
- co-produced change – awareness, practice, curricula, policy & legislation

Co-development of

- An ethics model
- A participation framework

Now being used in different settings & countries

Children and young people's reflections on participation and my reflections on the journey



# Political Context – opportunities & change

Devolution settlement for the UK

New Institutions: Scottish Parliament (1999);  
'Constitutional Feminism' : 'equality in its bricks'  
(Mackay 2010)

New ideas and norms: accountability; openness  
and participation; powersharing and equal  
opportunities

New actors: 'gender coup'; women's  
representation; feminist outsiders within; new  
political spaces for feminist activists'

Equality policy machinery: Equality Unit (now  
EIHR Directorate); mainstreaming,  
gender/equalities budgeting

Human Rights Instruments: (UK Govt  
ratification/UK/Scots incorporation...)



# Domestic Abuse Policy

Feminist alliances and actors: Cabinet, politicians, civil servants, secondments, practitioner and activists, academics

Domestic Abuse a national priority from the onset: 1<sup>st</sup> Cttee Bill; Parliamentary Debates; 1<sup>st</sup> national strategy; national funding

Domestic Abuse gendered rights-based definition adopted based on CEDAW (ratified 1986...), DA rooted in gender inequality

DA Infrastructure: Minister chaired national group (with CoSLA); local authority vawg fora, women's sector expertise/influence, efforts to respond to voice...

Widened to include forms of VAWG (Equally Safe) - critiqued for lack of intersectionality and children's rights & redrafted... (Istanbul ratified)



# Children's Rights

Parliamentary Cttee on Implementing Art 12, UNCRC ratification 1991

DA policy definition 'and children' - shifts in practice & conceptual change research-informed

Feminist children's rights activists in political spaces

Parliamentary research (Fitzpatrick et al, 2003)

Listen Louder Campaign (SWA 2004-6) : child political activists' access to Ministers, Cttees; multi-million ££

'Secondment' to Equality Unit

A national priority: CoSLA guidance

Delivery Plan: Spaces for children as key informants, and educators (see Parliamentary Debates)

Voice Against Violence

Equally Safe – Everyday Heroes

UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill passed unanimously 16 March 2021, UK legal challenge 'outwith competence of Scot Parliament'.



## CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

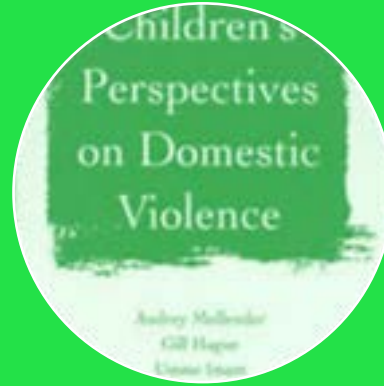


# Shifts in understanding & context



## Activism

Feminism,  
cyp rights



## Academia

Research,  
theory



## Actors

Politics, policy  
practice

Shifts in approach

# Participatory action research projects

## Speaking Truth to Power



### Young Experts

Pilot, 2.5 year in-depth PAR  
Integral to domestic abuse  
policy-making, budgets, priority  
setting, action, evaluation



### Young adult experts

Shifted Equally Safe framing of  
GBV, changed Domestic Abuse  
Law, embedded participation



### Young survivors GBV

Influenced Equally Safe Plan  
priorities, advised Cabinet, Sol  
Gen and CoSLA  
(small?) part of action

## Qualitative research & practice roots

### **Refuge research** (Fitzpatrick et al 2003)

-> model refuge, £12m, design

### **Listen Louder**, 44 children and young people (in Houghton 2013)

-> film-making, petition, Parliament events

-> multi-million fund for children's services

### **Moving House research** (SWA 2006)

-> importance of moving on with support

### **Innovation in practice**

-> training of children's panel/child protection

## National Young Expert Advisory Group on Domestic Abuse Policy – a pilot

8 young survivors of domestic abuse, aged 15-19 (at the onset), previous involvement

Direct, regular, sustained access to Cabinet Ministers over 2.5 yrs

Official status within structure as young experts, equal to adult expert Board

Action Research with other young and adult experts – fact-finding & peer empowerment

Co-production of policy with civil servants/national leads

Governance of national policy – monitoring and setting priorities, influencing budgets





# Participatory Action Research in Policy – Making

## Illustrative example:

### Lived experience + peer research

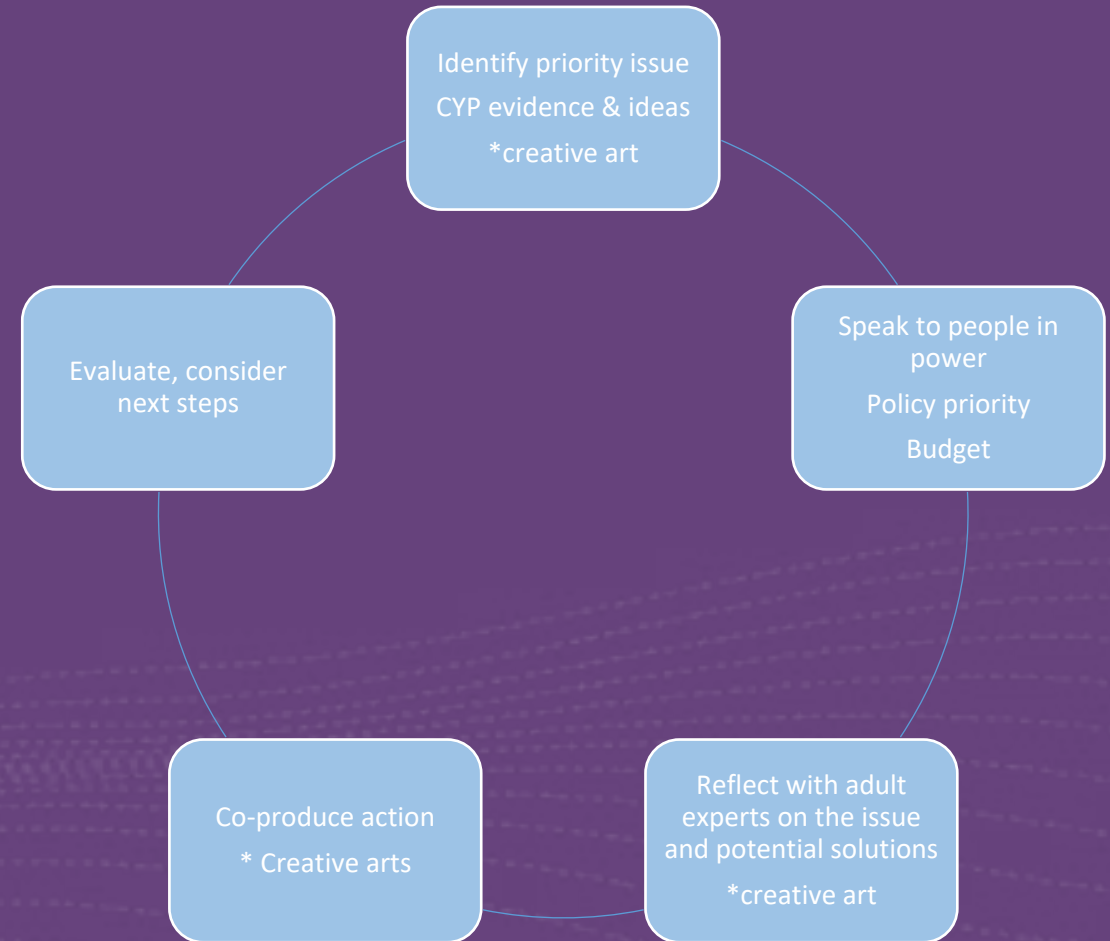
No way of talking about domestic abuse  
No language to name it as a child  
Nowhere to go  
Alone, isolated

### Collective Solutions + meet policy-makers

Need Information, where to get help  
Non scary advert  
Telling you you're not alone  
-> budget for advertising and co-production project

### Exchange of expertise & power – adult + child

Young creative director & intergenerational team  
Equal voice  
VAV veto - power  
Shared power with civil servants and media experts  
Power over media publicity – co-clients of PR co  
Part of evaluation

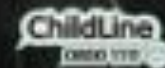




<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf5yjJq7ubU>  
[https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Domestic+Abuse+-+Young+People+-+30+second+ad/1\\_mhn0on6l](https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Domestic+Abuse+-+Young+People+-+30+second+ad/1_mhn0on6l)

## Feel like you're living in a war zone?

If there's domestic abuse going on at home, talking to a trusted adult or teacher, calling ChildLine or webchating at [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk) can really help.



# Key messages: train professionals, responses need improved

## Want Some Expert Advice?

Some bottle it up, some go nuts, some completely hide their personalities because they think that they're not good enough any more...

### Don't

- Treat me as a victim / I just need you to listen
- Look at the kids and see the problem, see what's causing it
- Assume it's like any other problem, it isn't, it affects the horse, the social status, the day to day health, mentally, physically, everything ... you've no idea
- Tell everyone my business
- Make decisions for me
- Judge me
- Let me down
- Just let it happen
- Make the situation worse
- Forget we're in danger
- Break my trust

I used everything as an excuse  
the money, the care,  
the dog, the police, everything...

School was my escape then the identity  
anything to put off going home.

You're the most intelligent person around, finally for a while you get up to what you want, the child or young person puts a lot of trust in you, what shouldn't be discussed in any way.

### Do

- Take the time listen to me and pay attention to how I feel about it all
- Look behind the behaviour, see what's causing it
- Introduce me to local workers and groups that support me with domestic abuse stuff
- Educate yourself about it, read a leaflet, give that leaflet to me, educate others about it
- Tell me different steps of how to deal with it at home
- Speak about it, be open about things, as open as you feel you can
- Be very careful with the information I give you, you don't have to contact home, or if you do speak to me first!
- Have balance with anyone going through domestic abuse - you have no idea what it's like
- Be confident that you can make a difference
- Listen to young people if you're the adult because they are important

It is their tomorrow,  
it is their future.  
Make sure young people  
can speak out.

# From Caterpillar to Butterfly ... **PARTICIPATE!**

What's participation? It's taking part, wanting to make a difference to something you believe in. Anyone can do it, speak for yourself - don't let adults speak for you. Be part of the action! Here's some inspiration from our amazing journey ...

I'd got support ... given my views ... spoken out ...  
spoken to a researcher ... advised on research ...  
been part of a groupwork pilot ... shared my experience ...  
been part of a campaign ... trained adults ... wanted to  
make things better for other kids

We joined a group ... all of us different ... shared experience  
of domestic abuse ... different experience of services ... had  
our own views ... shared opinions ... held peer-led discussions  
... used creative methods ... lots of talents and skills ... built  
trust ... built a team

We wanted equal say ... different roles to  
put strengths and talents ... everyone's voice  
equally heard ... team building and fun every  
step of the way ... rewards ... help with  
careers ... to build our skills and confidence  
... a sense of pride ... to agree our own  
priorities ... democracy ... a group voice

We convinced people we were as important as  
adults ... told adults what needed changing ...  
listened to others ... got some allies (chosen  
adults that can help/excuse) ... listened to  
other children ... read stuff ... went on fact-  
finding trips ... developed our arguments ... got  
equal status as advisors to people at the top ...

We needed safety first ... trust ... comfort ... our own  
space ... privacy ... to not get sometimes ... no discrimination  
... friendships ... confidentiality ... anonymity ... for our  
trusted manager ... not too many adults ... adults who  
computer ill/don't dominate or lead ... support from our  
mum ... respect ...

## KEY SAYS:

Target the top ... talk direct to people in power  
... set the agenda (or if it's their meeting go  
first) ... invite the right people (so they can't  
pull the wires) ... chair the meeting ... have clear  
individual roles ... know your stuff ... know them  
and what they could do for you/children ... have  
more young people than adults (if possible) ... prep  
loads ... focus ... show you mean business!