



Transcript: IRISS podcast episode, Improving Justice in Child Contact

[Improving justice in child contact](#) is a project exploring child contact decisions in families affected by domestic abuse. It is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). Child contact is understood to be the systems and court processes which decide whether and how a child sees a parent that they are not living with.

It is a partnership project across Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania and Scotland.

Speakers: Kay Tisdall (**KT**), Marsha Scott (**MS**)

Host(s): Michelle Drumm (**MD**)

What follows is a transcription of the audio recording.

MD: [Improving Justice in Child Contact](#) is a project funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) that is exploring child contact decisions in families affected by domestic abuse. Child contact is understood to be the systems and court processes which decide whether and how a child sees a parent that they are not living with. It is a partnership project across Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania and Scotland.

Professor Kay Tisdall from the [Childhood and Youth Studies Research Group](#) at the University of Edinburgh, and Dr Marsha Scott, CEO of [Scottish] [Women's Aid](#) kindly gave me their time to talk about the project.

This episode was recorded before the implementation of social distancing requirements due to COVID-19. However, we are aware that those requirements create particular concerns around child contact and domestic abuse and that this content is therefore relevant to COVID-19 responses.

MD: So thank you both for joining me. Could I ask just firstly, why the need for a project on improving justice in child contact?

KT: I would start by saying there's a desperate need and we're actually finding out through the project both the potential for change but the need for change, I would say.

MS: I mean obviously when we called the project "[Justice in Child Contact](#)" it was because of the massive amount of injustice we were finding and have found for years and years in the organisations that have been providing support for women and children for now more than forty years in Scotland, but also in the other countries that are engaged in this European-wide project, and I suppose one of the things that's been most illuminating for me about it has been the extent of injustice everywhere, and if anybody was under any illusion that somehow somewhere else there was some





housing and existence for children and their mothers in the context of domestic abuse in civil courts, well we can tell you there's not.

MD: Could you tell me a bit more about this injustice?

MS: Well absolutely, from all kinds of perspectives. I suppose mine firstly is from the experiences of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, which is we all live in countries that say there's no excuse for domestic abuse and that children should never experience domestic abuse, and yet we treat them as collateral damage. Their needs, their interests, their experiences are invisible in our courts, and their very being is a tool for perpetrators to use to control their mothers but also to revictimise them and courts are blind absolutely blind to that for the most part victimise them, and courts are blind, absolutely blind to that for the most part, and certainly from a children's rights perspective, and I'll hand that to you.

KT: Yeah. Certainly I'm coming to it from a children's human rights kind of perspective and I just think there's real issues about recognising that children are part of this, and then when they get into the contested cases it's just overwhelmingly clear that all too often their views are not considered and don't become part of the decision making, not even heard, and it's just over and over again we're hearing this from children and I think this project's really helpful and, Marsha, you might want to comment on this, about really bringing together the children's experience and the non-abusing mother's experience and realising how children's rights and women's rights come together. Do you want to?

MS: Absolutely. I think that one of the most powerful alliances that we have ever been involved in has been a collaboration that really started as the beginning of the Scottish Domestic Abuse Bill [Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill] was being debated with children's rights organisations, and Women's Aid organisations have always considered ourselves women's rights organisations from the very beginning, and I think over the last ten years our developing into children's rights organisations and seeing that you have to make a powerful argument that you can't do programme or practice interventions with women unless you understand the impact on their children, and you can't in parallel do supports or interventions for children unless you consider the impact on their mothers, and when you bring those two perspectives together you have a real picture of what's happening in courts, in homes, in schools all over the place, but unless you have both of those pictures together you really can't see either one of them clearly.

MD: Mmmhmm. So would you agree that mother's voices are being heard but this project is more about the children's voices really being amplified?

KT: No, no.

MS: Oh no, mother's voices are not heard. Their experiences are more commonly discussed I think in the discourse, but certainly especially when you get in civil court the children are a possession that gets batted back and forth by the courts, and who has a right to them, rather than the actual experience of domestic abuse and its





impact on both mother and child and the implications therefore for how the state should or shouldn't protect them in a custody and visitation case.

KT: The thing I'm going to add to it, particularly talking in this case from a Scottish perspective, is that we really do know now that most of the cases that are heard in the courts, actually a large majority of them involve domestic abuse but yet it's like our court systems aren't sort of fully recognising that and sort of basing around that. So their issue is about the domestic abuse actually not necessarily being explicitly acknowledged, explicitly talked about, and then that in turn silences children.

MD: Okay.

MS: Absolutely.

KT: So it's put forward as a parental dispute. You're lucky if anything if children get involved, and if they do say something it starts to get that one of the biggest concerns from the decision makers in court's about children being manipulated.

MS: Yeah.

KT: The minute they get put in that context nobody listens to what they say. Instead I think we've got to realise that that's the situation we're in.

MS: Absolutely.

KT: It won't always be but we actually need to figure out ways in Scotland to realise unfortunately these contested cases are very likely to involve that. So how do we enable children with their mothers to be able to express their concerns and actually whatever decision needs to suit the mother and the child?

MS: And I'd take that even further. I think it's actually not as much a task of enabling them to have their voices heard as it is making the system stop silencing them and listen to them and their voices and their views, and that they're part of the decision making process rather than a one-off at best at the moment, which often doesn't happen, where someone will have asked a child to fill out a form. So the whole system is geared from a very patriarchal history of children and women being possessions, and we've moved to some sort of notion that women are not possessions, although we still treat them as such often, but we haven't even come close yet to challenging the notion that somehow parents don't have some inalienable right to their children.

MD: So this project then has a group of young experts involved, and you've called the group "Yello"?

MS: Well I think they've called themselves "[Yello!](#)"

KT: And you have to raise your arm when you say it.

MS: And you have to say, "Yello!"





MD: Oh I like it. "[Yello!](#)" Okay. So this group of young experts, they're advising on this project. So this is really their opportunity to be heard?

MS: Yes. I think all of them have attempted to be heard in their own ways and they're all survivors of domestic abuse. They have much to tell us about how we could improve all of those things and what they've said to us really reflects what I know of adult survivors, women survivors of domestic abuse, who say, "I can't get justice for myself. I can't get the system to redo the mistakes it's already done, but what I can do is try and make a difference for somebody else", and I think that's very much where these children are coming from.

KT: Yeah, and "[Yello!](#)", as I raise my hand, it's 6 young people who've decided to go on their journey with us, isn't it?

MS: Mmmhmm.

KT: So I think their ages are from 12 to 18?

MS: I think some of them have been involved with us at a younger age in "Power Down", which was a previous participation project that we were engaged in with the Children's Commission, but I think by now some of them have gotten to the ripe old age of 12.

KT: Yeah.

MD: And how exactly are they involved?

MS: Well they do a number of things, all sorts of things actually. They have done things from create a comic strip that has now been translated into the other languages of the project. So the other countries involved are Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Portugal. Got them all right for once! The young people have been developing and completed a comic strip that talks about the issues that have come up for them, and that helps the projects in the other countries as they're beginning to do participation work with young people. I think one of my favourite things that they've done is visit the Minister for Community Safety to express their concerns about their treatment in civil courts, on Halloween.

MD: Okay.

MS: So they showed up in ghost costumes to illustrate the fact that they felt really invisible in the way the system operates. They are going to be giving evidence to the Justice Committee in a few weeks about the Children (Scotland) Bill and improvements from their perspective that need to be made in it. They are active and informed and informative.

KT: It was really quite powerful when they came and joined us at the first face-to face meeting with all the partners and they gave us their insight about how we should work with children and young people, and in fact that is the most popular blog in the



project and it's available in multiple languages, but I think that's really useful and that really quite inspired us here in Scotland and helped us to work together, but also I guess the project because for some of our partners this was a much newer kind of idea about really recognising children and young people's expertise and kind of guiding that, and with some of the partners it's really inspiring, like the Portuguese partners, I mean, my, have they really kind of revolutionised their approach to working with children and young people, even have cycles of it now.

MS: Absolutely.

KT: And they're very pleased that now a judge has asked to meet with the children and young people in the Portugal team about how they can change things in Portugal, and it's just actually really coming from the children and young people and "[Yello!](#)" inspiring the project, and then you can see it leading to these kind of developments.

MD: So was there "[Yello!](#)" across the different teams?

MS: No. No.

KT: Not as developed as "[Yello!](#)"

MS: There'd been a bit of engagement I think in some places and none at all in some of the countries and they are just beginning to develop the infrastructure in order to support participation well. I think that was one of the real gifts of the first session when the young people came and advised everybody, was that it's very difficult I think, unless you've had experience with successful participation projects like this, to have a vision of how powerful children and young people's work can be when you include it in your own, and I think the countries that hadn't done any of this work saw these young people, saw how confident and competent they were.

MD: And creative.

MS: Absolutely, and were inspired, and I think you have to kind of see that. The other thing that they illustrated so well is something that we as an advocacy organisation have been saying ever since the debate on the Domestic Abuse Bill [Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill], which is it's not only the right thing to do because of children's rights and UNCRC [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child] that children participate in decisions and policy making that affects their lives, it is the most powerful tool we can think of when they're not silenced anymore and the system listens.

KT: In fact, they've provided some quotations for this discussion and there's one that really calls out with that from them saying, "Don't dismiss us. We experienced it and we know what we're talking about."

MS: Absolutely.

KT: Yeah.





MD: Okay, great. So can you just tell me then what key things have you learned from the project about how we can better support children's rights and child contact processes?

KT: You know what I was thinking about Marsha is again when we had that face to-face and then we had that session where we looked across what seemed quite different systems, and I think you commented just sort of how powerfully some things came out, so quite different contexts, but the difficulties for women and children to get any legal advice.

MS: Absolutely.

KT: If children aren't informed it actually puts them more at risk.

MS: And also I believe Scotland was the only country in which children had a legal right to legal representation of the five. So that was quite interesting, even though they have it on paper but they don't have it in actuality, and what was stunningly interesting to me was that when we talked about because [Scottish Women's Aid](#) is very aware of the acute problem with access to legal services for both women and children who've experienced domestic abuse and were doing quite a bit of work on it, and one of the critical problems or pinch points I suppose you would call it in the system is that organisations like my own are not allowed to hire lawyers to become specialist lawyers to service our population because of regulations, jobs for the boys is what I would call it, and really interestingly in all five countries despite the fact that we have incredibly different histories, legal systems, regulatory systems, that is true in every single country, and I'm stunned because it has a huge impact on access issues and yet nobody ever really talks about the fact that the legal systems are designed so that they are impossible to access for children.

MD: Why do you think that is?

MS: Well I think that we have systems that have seen children as possessions for so long and that when you design a legal system, so for instance legal aid in Scotland, how do you create a consensus in a system that has enormous vested interest? So if you're going to create a mechanism for providing legal aid services for people who can't afford them, whose vested interests are most in jeopardy will be the people who are being paid to provide those services. So if you create a system that only those people are allowed to manage and deliver then you've protected their interests, but what it then essentially means is that the cost to the society is so high to provide legal services for children and women that they essentially don't get them. That's the way things operate in Scotland at the moment.

KT: It goes to say, I mean there has been historical and still are historical shifts in how children are perceived that's exactly what you're saying about the possession. I guess maybe taking that a little further too is my stance, is actually that our systems have to realise that children are part of the stakeholders and the people too, and that's actually a big shift, and so all sympathies, I actually think it's a really difficult job to be a judge, but part of it is for judges around all of these countries actually just to do just



as much as if it's a defender or whatever. Children are also part of the court system too. It's actually not okay when a judge or anybody else in the system says like, "I don't have expertise in this. I can't do it. Somebody else has to do it." Instead, just like they have to know the law, just like they have to know these other things, they have to think, "Actually, I need to know how to involve children and young people", and it's absolutely relevant to these cases that we're talking about.

MD: Yeah.

KT: I don't think they always see that. They think, "Oh I can maybe get an expert who's going to get that children's view and I'll take their interpretation and then I'll interpret it myself and make the decision." So it is a really kind of a conceptual shift to think, "Actually this is our responsibility."

MS: And it is extraordinary to me that when you listen to advocates from women's organisations in all five countries and they describe what happens in courtrooms when the question of child contact and custody comes up, you could be describing any courtroom in Scotland or any courtroom in Cyprus or Portugal or Bulgaria or Romania, because the interactions of the system work almost identically. It's extraordinary. Now I don't want to underplay the progress that we've made in Scotland. The fact that we are doing this project and that we have some tools to offer to the other countries around children's participation is reflective of the fact that I think we have come some way, but it's worth noting that every single one of those other countries have also signed up to the UN convention [UNCRC] on the rights of the child and yet children's participation doesn't seem to have risen to the top of the pile in terms of priorities around implementing.

MD: Is there anything else you want to add about what's being learned about supporting children's rights?

KT: We always want things to go further, right, but there has been I think a real excitement during the project in that in some ways it's kind of opportunities that arise sometimes unfortunately because some kind of crisis or other things happen, but Susana's experience in Cyprus and that she really might get an equivalent of a children's rights officer. Do you want to speak more about that Marsha, because I know you visited?

MS: I think it's really important that we always remember that you can't always predict not only the bad things but the good things that might happen, and so the fact that in Cyprus for instance the really strong women's advocacy organisation that's working with us on this has worked with the Violence Against Women organisations for a long time to try and improve services and policy there, and they had a bit of a breakthrough moment, and we've had them in Scotland and everybody hopefully has them, in which they decided to create essentially a one stop shop for services, and in a place that's as small as Cyprus you probably only need one of those but you might need some regional areas, but anyway, this one stop shop, because of the advocacy of this organisation that's been involved in this project, will have a children's rights

officer involved in it and a whole mechanism for children's participation will be part of the foundation of doing that I think, and none of us saw that on the horizon, including the organisation in Cyprus. I remember when Susana from MIGS texted me and said, "Oh my god, they've announced this in the parliament and they want me to run it", we were all like, "Really? Really?"

MD: Uh-huh.

MS: So it is a bit about all good work is done in faith, Albert Schweitzer said. I've just massacred that quote but something along those lines, you know, that you have to try and create enabling environments and then trust that the other work that's going on alongside yours will help produce some outcomes that you maybe can't see.

MD: And I suppose it's like the issue around having capacity to support these things, so if something comes out of the blue like that where I've been given this task to do, run this centre, and it's like, "Oh, wasn't expecting it"?

KT: The timing was great.

MS: And if they hadn't been there nobody would have known to ask for it because children's rights officers don't exist in Cyprus. They barely exist in Scotland.

MD: Yeah.

KT: Yeah. From my narrative of it, you know, the project just was sort of coming on the first time because of course we had discussions with Susana in Cyprus in terms of setting it up, so she was sort of aware of it, and then the whole part of the project is to share these kind of models of children's rights officers across. So it was kind of sitting there and the project was there to facilitate it.

MS: Absolutely.

KT: I mean, as you said, you couldn't predict it but I think it shows the power of these kind of partnerships working, that you can really like ground things well and have it available when these moments come.

MS: And they have to be in the environment in order for things to develop faster than a snail's pace. The other thing that I would notice I would say, or observe, is I've been involved in a few European projects and many of them just because of the lack of infrastructure in the civil society organisations across all of Europe, but in particular in a number of the eastern European countries, that I've seen it has been very difficult to hold these projects together as an actual joint engagement. So what would happen is that you would have five separate little projects that would come together at the end and talk to each other about what they'd done. Whereas what is really different in this project, and I have got to give credit to Kay and to Ruth for this, is that we have managed to do this together from the beginning, and that was not an easy task across borders, across languages, across austerity in so many of the countries, and I think the

outcomes therefore are going to be really, really impressive compared to an awful lot of the European projects.

MD: So moving on from that then, could you just tell me about what's been learned about how we can better keep children and women safe from domestic abuse?

MS: Well it all comes down to what it says in our Equally Safe Violence Against Women strategy, which is that essentially we cannot end domestic abuse experienced by anybody until we grasp the nettle of dealing with women's inequality and children's inequality, and you can see that in every element of women's and children's experiences, the fact that they're more likely to be poor, the fact that they are less likely to be at the tables of power who make decisions about resources in their local community and in their region and in their nation, the fact that they are so much less likely to be on the bench in a courtroom, all of the elements of women's inequality that come together to reduce women's space for action and to eliminate children's space for action so that they have no place to turn to engage their own agency and to use their own power. The fact that is illustrated over and over in every country that we're working in tells us that we have the analysis right and that until we do something about women's homelessness, until we do something about the fact that they have precarious employment and no childcare and all of those things that we've all been banging on about for so long, then we will continue to put sticking plasters on the problem.

MD: So systemic changes then are really required?

KT: Something that again in my experience working with [Scottish Women's Aid](#) and the researchers and other partners in that actually really shifted us to realise children are affected by domestic abuse, and actually that is the fundamental shift that we're probably still very much in the journey here in Scotland, and again that's very much a journey with a lot of our project partners. Actually that still is sort of something that people don't, it's almost because it's quite hard for adults to really take that on-board for children. It's not protective to think they're not affected. They are affected by domestic abuse.

MS: And it goes even further than that. It's so much beyond did they hear it, did they see it, were they present for it, and I think maybe in Scotland part of the key to our continuing to make progress around children's rights in domestic abuse is that we've had to grapple with what coercive control looks like, and so often the most harmful impact on children as well as their mother are the kinds of coercive and corrosive I would say controls that perpetrators use in the family, and as much with children as they do with the mother, and I think that until we begin to shine a light on that it was really difficult to convince people that children were harmed whether they were in the house or in the room or in the country even. If they're in the family they are harmed by domestic abuse, and it is really just the beginnings of an era hopefully when people understand that. I was really heartened by, I gave evidence on the Children (Scotland) Bill, as you did, to the Justice Committee, and we were talking lots about domestic abuse and the context of the policy changes that have been proposed, and I think the



Justice Committee gets it finally, which is an extraordinary thing and we have to thank the women and children who've come forward and told their stories to help them get it I think, but it is far from a done deal in other places. So I just wrote a piece for a Canadian journal and they asked me to comment on what had been written, and children were completely missing, and this was women's advocates, but children were just invisible because they're talking coercive control but they're still thinking physical assault. So children's experiences are just beginning to be told now I think and their stories, and they're just being allowed into the room to tell their stories, and that has to happen everywhere for a while I think before these changes really bed in.

KT: And when I get the chance to talk to people I often will share with them part of "[Power Up and Power Down](#)", which of course was part of your partnership thing, and one of the things that always strikes me and it seems to strike the audience too is examples like pets. You can imagine from a children's perspective when they name their family they usually name their pets, right?

MS: Mmmhmm.

KT: Incredibly important. Never give a survey to a child, ask them about the family without having pets there, and then how sometimes the pets are used in this coercive control where the pet is sometimes, it can be used by the perpetrator in terms of, "I've got your dog", and I think that's a powerful thing. We know that because once again children were kind enough to tell us this story, and that's become part of that narrative so we can really see it.

MS: I think what should be quite explicit, I mean we've had children whose pets have been killed by a perpetrator or who have had their dog or other pet threatened if they didn't say they wanted contact with the perpetrator or, you know, when mum was trying to leave. So I would say that we knew about pets but we didn't really pay close attention until "[Power Up Power Down](#)", and we heard first of all some of these horrific stories, but also we heard in the children's voices how important it was to them. So that's why it's now in the Domestic Abuse Bill [Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill], because children told these stories.

MD: Mmmhmm.

MS: And parliamentarians heard and listened, but I think pets, I know with "[Yello!](#)" one of the things that we've been hearing about is how they get treated in court, and a young woman said, "It shouldn't be okay for my father's lawyer to call me a liar in court", and I was like, "Of course it shouldn't", and then if you just begin to think about what it's like if you're a twelve year old who's been made essentially to come into court and talk about something in your family and about where you should go and a lawyer calls you a liar, you know, and yet that kind of behaviour goes on probably in every local authority area in Scotland. So I think when you hear it from young people and you can hear the pain and anger in young people's voices when they talk about those kinds of experiences, it changes you forever.



KT: And I think our colleague, Fiona Morrison, she's put it very well for me, is that that kind of situation, you know, it's treating children's views as evidence and that's actually not what the children's rights perspective is. It's more that their children's views should be part of the decision making, not necessarily that, you know, sometimes they should be making a decision, but not necessarily that it shouldn't be part of the decision making. It's not evidence and I think sometimes that gets mixed up and that's yet another reason why that kind of silence exists. If you get called a liar in that situation where do you go from there?

MS: And also it is that kind of thing of it's about this concrete thing rather than the fact that children's feelings are concrete things, and that how they feel about what you're asking them to do or not do needs to be a critical component of what the decision is rather than a source of corroboration or contravention of a piece of evidence, as you say.

KT: I think there's a real interest by quite a lot of sort of different stakeholders to use that term to make things better, that it is good that children's views are a really core thing that they want to reform with the Children (Scotland) Bill. I still think we probably need a larger discussion in terms of actually if we're really serious about these child-centred and these other ideas, how do we really bring women and children's rights together? We probably need to think a little bit more radically, but that might be for the next five-year project. I think they're real things we can do now but I think a lot of it's going to be, certainly in Scotland, is that kind of thing, you know, let's get good legislation that supports it, but it's as much as then all the stakeholders, you know, are the judges going to see it as their views? Who are going to be the people supporting? The one thing that's so consistent around all the evidence in Scotland is that children ask to have good support of advocacy, like the children's rights officer. That's basically, that's the one overwhelming thing and it's a real chance, but it's still a question in Scotland, are we going to deliver that?

MS: I think it's children's rights officers in some settings but mostly it's good support, whether it's a rights-based provision or whether it's somebody to talk to and somebody who can tell you what your rights are but also just listen, and I think...

KT: [Super Listener](#).

MS: Yeah, a [Super Listener](#), and the other thing is you cannot get good quality and safe participation unless you have an infrastructure that includes that kind of support, and we have it in 36 areas of Scotland plus a few that aren't in our network certainly, and the question of the hour is do we treat it as an option or do we listen to children and say, "Well if you want their participation and if you want to honour their rights to participate in decisions made about their lives then you have to be willing to enable it by putting the support in place"?

MD: One of my questions is there may be social work practitioners and managers or social care managers who are listening to this today and I'm just wondering what you would like them to perhaps think about doing differently?

MS: The first thing I would want would be if they're really interested in this project to go to the project's website and take a look at some of the blogs that the young people have done and the workers with young people, but more broadly I would really like them to get the support that the "[Safe and Together](#)" approach would provide them. So "[Safe and Together](#)" is in I think about 15 of our local authorities in varying degrees of development. It's a really robust and competent approach to child welfare responses in the context of domestic abuse partners with the non-abusing parent. It takes a children's rights respecting approach and it helps identify the particular perpetrator patterns for young people, and part of the difficulty with just recently having come to the conclusion that children are harmed by domestic abuse and coercive control is that skill of seeing in particular how this particular perpetrator harms this particular child, that you can therefore talk about in a child welfare hearing. It's not a skill that an awful lot of social workers are likely to have so they need to be supported to get those skills, and I think "[Safe and Together](#)" is the safest way to do that, and there's a lot of folks in Scotland who are now well versed in "[Safe and Together](#)", so it's a really good network. So those 2 things, and also contact your local [Women's Aid](#) and just find out about the children's services and what they're seeing in terms of how social work and [Women's Aid](#) can work together.

KT: I think if I could add that for social work many of them are I think, working with many practitioners, great at this, but part of the debate's about do children have capacity to participate or to have these views and things, and I think, as I know social work training and practitioners do, but turning around that conversation. So instead of children having to prove their capacity, instead we should all presume children do have the capacity and it's really our obligation and I would suggest an obligation of social work practitioners along others, in it's more for us to figure out how to support children's capacity, how to provide them with the information, the support, the trust and relationships, so they are in a position to give an informed view and to continue to do so.

MD: Mmmhmm.

MS: The presumption needs to be that children have capacity and then the next question is how do we support that.

KT: Yeah, and so we should presume that children have the capacity. The question is the capacity of the adults...

MS: Yeah.

KT: ... to figure out how to communicate.

MS: Exactly.

KT: And that's the question that it should be, not whether the child is capable or not.

MS: When I worked at West Lothian Council we had the first children's rights officer who specialised in domestic abuse cases, and she worked with children as young as four



years old. There isn't any question I don't think in the mind of people who do a lot of work with young children that they have very definite and convincing ways of making their feelings clear, and it's a bit like asking them in the right language.

MD: Mmmhmm. My final question is what do you hope will happen after the project finishes?

MS: I think we want that five-year project done more radical. More radical system change. What do you think?

KT: Yeah. Well, transform and change. I mean in the short term obviously I hope that we'll really progress things in Scotland and that "[Yello!](#)" will, well now they are going to talk to the Justice Committee, which is great, but actually some of the key demands, that we have to get them into policy and even better implementation. Overall with the project I guess I'm a great believer in learning from others and learning across sort of contexts, and I do think that kind of joining from us getting out of Scotland and learning from elsewhere, it challenges you on those assumptions or like, you know, why do you have to do it that way? I do think we just need to continue with those kind of partnership projects.

MS: Absolutely, and also it really I think strengthens our arguments in Scotland. We've been making a [Scottish Women's Aid](#) argument for a long time that the legal aid system is not fit for purpose for domestic abuse survivors, but then to be able to go to them and talk about how the arrangements that we have here in Scotland are replicated in all of these other countries that also don't have appropriate legal access to justice for women and children, helps them see that it's not just us saying, "Oh there's something wrong in Scotland." It's that the systemic development of legal services for domestic abuse survivors has been awed everywhere, and then I think that that feels a bit more systemic than political, and that helps us in our argument.

MD: Well we'll leave it there. I'd like to thank you both very much for speaking to me about this on this topic.

MS: You're very welcome.

KT: We feel passionate, don't we?

MS: I was going to say, it's never any trouble to get us to talk!

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