[00:00:18.630] - Jingle

On the Engender Scotland's Feminist Policy podcast.

#### [00:00:26.120] - Alys Mumford

Hello and welcome to On the Engender 2020 Review, I'm Alys Mumford from Engender, and this episode takes a look back at what was, let's face it, quite a year. As we record this just at the end of January 2021, Scotland is back in, or remains in, lockdown; Covid-19 still with us; and while Brexit has now happened, there remains a great deal of uncertainty over our future relationships with Europe. So in many ways, the start of 2021 doesn't feel that different from 2020. But we wanted to take a moment to look back, take stock and reflect on the year so I'm here with my wonderful co-host, Amanda Stanley. Hi, Amanda.

#### [00:01:04.850] - Amanda Stanley

Hello. Yes, absolutely. Last year was such a ride, it can be actually quite hard to remember anything about it that wasn't Covid-19, I think. Don't you think Alys?

# [00:01:14.180] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, for sure, I mean, I was finding that during the year when we were, you know, starting the episodes with what's going on, I was like, "no idea!". Seems to categorise the whole year.

#### [00:01:25.370] - Amanda Stanley

Yup, but while Covid coloured everything at Engender, we continued to work on and talk about really important issues for women's equality. So I guess in the spirit of looking back and reflecting, we're going to kick off by revisiting the 'you'll have had yer feminism' project that I produced. So 'You'll have had yer Feminism' was a mini series charting the history of Engender and the wider women's movement in Scotland for the past twenty five years. I had the absolute pleasure of traveling all over from Dunoon to Dundee, interviewing feminists about their work in the equality sector, how things have changed since their first involvement and what still needs to change now.

[00:02:00.890] [clip]

#### [00:02:01.250] - Esther Breitenbach

But what was interesting, I think sometime in the mid 90s, there was someone who was doing research about women's organisations and the third sector. She assumed because we were producing this publication that there was an office and staff

[00:02:14.500] [laughter].

[00:02:18.560] - Esther Breitenbach And we were 'nooo'. So I think the gender audit gave a profile to the organisation.

[00:02:22.090] - Sue Robertson I think it was hugely important for credibility for Engender.

[00:02:27.050] - Esther Breitenbach Very pleased to hear that!

[00:02:27.820] - Sue Robertson

You know, I think it was one of our main products and and it was always lingering in the background. The pressure behind it was also to get the government to produce it.

#### [00:02:38.430] - Yvonne Strachan

I think that was the important thing, because actually, although you say everybody knew there wasn't any collection of data in a specific way. So what the gender audit was doing was saying, "here it is". And there was nowhere else that had that collation of material. So not only was it significant for the visibility of Engender, really important, actually the reason why people...that it was in one place with information in a way that was accessible and that people could say, "oh my gosh, is this the state of play?" So. And other organisations who then used the gender audit as information that allowed them to argue their case or say, "well, look at this", it was hugely, hugely powerful and important.

[00:03:18.731] [clip ends]

#### [00:03:18.920] - Alys Mumford

Oh, I loved. I loved that project so much. Very jealous of you, Amanda, getting to chat to and meet all these amazing women and and actually doing it in person as well, which is nice to remember, you know - very nostalgic sitting across a coffee shop from someone.

#### [00:03:33.290] - Amanda Stanley

What I would give to hear "the next stop is Haymarket" right now, you know.

[00:03:40.700] [laughter]

#### [00:03:40.700] - Alys Mumford

Oh, dear. What small pleasures we will appreciate in future. And a reminder to everyone that if you haven't seen the photos of some of the folk that Amanda interviewed there, you can find them all on. Youllhavehadyerfeminism.com - photos taken by the wonderful Beth Chalmers, which are, yeah, a really nice tribute to some of the key people in the women's movement over the past twenty five years.

#### [00:04:05.750] - Amanda Stanley

Yeah. I think it was just like a really good opportunity as well to one thing that through listening to them stories especially and reflections that really highlighted the fact that it's so rare that we actually pause and take a break and take note of what organisations like Engender have achieved in the 25 years that they've been going and the years leading up to it. And I just think that you're going to hear them stories what you said was such a good way of archiving them histories. And yeah, I really urge everyone, if you've not listened yet, to go back in and revisit them. Yeah.

#### [00:04:36.620] - Alys Mumford

Some truly wicked women in our past..and present of course. So we had that, that was a really nice way of looking back and then and then March hit. And Covid-19 hit Scotland. And as well as having a practical impact on Engender - so staff with additional unpaid care responsibilities, office closing, cancelling of events, moving to homeworking. We also knew that this would have a huge impact on women across Scotland as Covid-19 itself, and the ensuing public health measures, women hardest.

[00:05:08.144] [clip]

#### [00:05:08.360] - Eilidh Dickson

So Engender produced a briefing the first couple of weeks as it kind of became apparent that the crisis was unfolding and quite a severe and significant way for the workload of Parliament. We started to pull together everything we knew and we produced a briefing which was aimed at both Scottish Government and UK Government, as well as parliaments in both jurisdictions, which focused on what we could pass in the initial term about how this was going to impact upon women, and some of those were things that would be dropped, as we've kind of already said, but other things that we maybe didn't know enough about at that point. So things like how the lockdown - at that point was being mooted - would affect women's capacity to take on paid work or to carry on with paid work, but also things like women on the front line in health and social care being more exposed to actually risk of catching and spreading the virus themselves and the health and safety risks that that contains. So we wanted to talk about a lot of different things, and we definitely saw that document as a bit of a moving, living document.

# [00:06:03.650] - Eilidh Dickson

But we were we were very aware that because this crisis touches on so many different aspects, one of the key issues was going to be keeping women within the foreground of planning at Scottish Government and also local authority crisis responses. So we worked very quickly to advocate for an additional amendment to the Bill, which requires the Government to look for opportunities to advance equality and eliminate discrimination whenever they're making any kind of decision making in relation to Covid and the broad sweep of powers that that bill contains.

#### [00:06:36.260] - Eilidh Dickson

But as you mentioned, it was quite fast-paced. So we produced that briefing on, I think that briefing when out on the Thursday and the Tuesday the Parliament held all three stages of it's scrutiny over the Bill, of the Coronavirus Bill, in one day. So we really didn't have very long to work out how that would work - how an amendment would work, where the duty should fall, the level of the duty...And also the normal ways in which we would go about securing things like amendments is we would work quite closely with MSPs. But as you've pointed out, Parliament's sitting less frequently, but it's also restricting the number of MSPs that can take part in debates within the chamber. So, yeah, it was a very different way of advocacy than we've maybe seen before. And we worked very closely with the Scottish Government and also MSPs from different parties to try and secure that amendment. But I think we were quite lucky in that...Well, not lucky...I think we probably had done our jobs in demonstrating the need for it. And by producing that initial briefing, which summed up everything that we knew and could predict about how Covid was going to impact on women.

# [00:07:39.350] - Amanda Stanley

So if Covid taught us one important thing, it's that things don't always go to plan, although that's something that we here at On the Engender are, dare I say, very used to.

[00:07:50.290] [record scratch to intro clip]

[00:07:52.910] - Alys Mumford When you're quite ready...

[00:07:55.640] - Amanda Stanley I will begin

[00:07:56.770] [laughter]

[00:07:56.770] - Alys Mumford Oh no you won't, I will begin

[00:07:56.770] - Amanda Stanley Oh no you will begin! I thought I was going to begin I was like, 'let the games begin'

[00:08:11.150] - Emma Ritch This isn't coming off my time is it?

[00:08:11.150] - Alys Mumford Yes it is it's coming off your minute. May the odds be ever in your favour.

[00:08:15.740] - Alys Mumford in order to preserve women's anonym..amonym...oh my god Amanda I'm really sorry

[00:08:20.120] - Jill Wood I was just going to make the point that that really...you said...what did you say? [00:08:25.070] - Emma Ritch A whole a bunch of stuff Jill.

[00:08:28.140] - Amanda Stanley Hello and welcome to the briefing bringing you fortnightly [garbled speech]

[00:08:34.100] - Alys Mumford Ahh I'm so happy.

[00:08:38.060] - Amanda Stanley Even the greatest fall.

[00:08:39.470] - Emma Ritch Do you want to take another pass at 'feminist'?

[00:08:43.130] - Alys Mumford It's because it's a typo in there! I was like 'this is a word I don't know so I'm just gonna go for it'

[00:08:50.600] - Emma Ritch I have done this to you Alys. And you did, with a bravura display of brio.

[00:08:55.460] - Alys Mumford Feminists...feminists...I can't say that ever. Amanda's got a super-cut of me saying feminists wrong. It's hard in the mic...feminists. And he started listening to brilliant feminist economists...He started listening to brilliant feminists ec...

[00:09:13.580] - Emily Thomson He started listen to Ailsa.

[00:09:14.480] - Alys Mumford So he started listening to...er...[trails off].

[00:09:20.570] - Emma Ritch Sorry, I had another point, but I've just completely lost it. As you were, sisters.

[00:09:24.530] [record scratch to end clip]

[00:09:25.610] - Alys Mumford

What can I say but, again, sorry Amanda. [laughter] So, while we were battling with patchy wi fi, interrupting cats, neighbourhood sports days, distracting pigeons, we took the opportunity to re-visit some of the in-person events we'd held in the previous year. And we were really happy to be able to share the recordings with you all. And they included an event with domestic abuse campaigner Luke Hart.

[00:09:50.354] [clip]

# [00:09:50.570] - Luke Hart

I suppose the control shows the potential - like they are willing to control a human being, whereas the abuse, like the physical violence, might well just be a vent, it might just be something that they do. But if they're not controlling every aspect of your life, they might be permitting you some aspect that you can live. But our father never let our mother live an inch away from him, like he would hunt her down into the toilet, he would find out where she was, he would go through every receipt, through her phone, like he didn't permit our mother an inch to live. And that in itself is indicative and I think that's what we've tried to teach people, is that you can't 'look for signs' because we as kids don't show the signs - that you know, and angry, dysfunctional child. Our mother didn't have bruises, our father wasn't

violent. If you look for signs and you don't understand control, that is kind of like playing battleships. I mean, domestic abuse will manifest in so many different ways with so many different people. You have to really imagine the kind of intricacies of how that person's trying to live. So we try and kind of get past the science and teach you to empathise as much as possible.

[00:10:58.322] [clip ends]

[00:10:58.700] - Amanda Stanley A panel discussion on intersectionality and international feminism.

[00:11:02.021] [clip]

# [00:11:02.210] - Talat Yaqoob

I absolutely agree that who is making the policies, who is in the position of power, whether we're talking about how UN uses language and how they participate in an intersectional analysis or or the international development movement as a whole, there's also a responsibility on those who occupy the 'equalities space'. So this is about feminist organisations, women's organisations, this is about anti-racism organisations and race equality organisations and others. And it is actually how much are they genuinely bought in to intersectionality as a concept? How are they participating in it? And what are they doing internally and in the work that they do to champion it? Because absolutely, absolutely at the end of day, the power lies with the people who are making the policies. But if women's organisations are the only ones talking about intersectionality, then we're going to be talking about women 'of colour' but I need race equality organisations to be talking about 'women' of colour. And when we do that as an equalities sector, we will be influencing change faster.

[00:12:08.570] [clip ends]

[00:12:08.840] - Alys Mumford And what turned out to be very prescient discussion on health inequalities, which was recorded at our annual general meeting in 2019.

[00:12:16.169] [clip]

# [00:12:59.150] - Parveen Khan

I'd just like to come in and say that, I think there's a bit more maybe awareness, there are in certain respects. But overall, it's well documented that for minority ethnic communities, Black minority ethnic communities, in the UK, they all report poorer health than their British counterparts. And that still exists. And the fact that it's caused by a wide range of factors, biological determinants, age, sex, hereditary factors. Wider social determinants will include education, social position, income, local environment, experiences of racism and racial discrimination, which Shaben has also touched on, consistently and continuously combats that. I don't know if our women's health plan will actually help overcome any of that. I think it's a step in the right direction and I certainly welcome it, as someone who's heading to menopause. But certainly I think there's a long way to go

[00:13:04.550] [clip ends]

# [00:13:08.690] - Alys Mumford

So yeah it was really great to be able to have those recordings to be able to revisit those events. And, yeah, remember being in rooms full of people with tea and cake, which was really nice. And and yeah, some of those brilliant speakers we had whether on health, or our international speakers on intersectionality. It was really, really great to be able to release those and revisit them.

# [00:13:29.270] - Amanda Stanley

Yeah, most definitely. And yeah even, you know, the Luke Hart episode - I've revisited, just personally, just out of interest to listen again during this lockdown that we've been having,

# [00:13:40.010] - Alys Mumford

you know, revisiting them, I'm listening currently to the audio book of Laura Bates' new book, Men Who Hate Women and she talks about Claire Hart, Luke's mother in that, you know, and lots of similar themes so yeah, it is linking with lots of stuff that still, you know, obviously currently going on with Covid and with lockdown, and with raging misogyny across the world.

# [00:14:02.960] - Amanda Stanley

Indeed. But on top of revisiting live events that we had held in the previous year, we were also really privileged to have great guests joining us on the podcast throughout 2020 to discuss vital issues of women's equality like Scotland's economy....

[00:14:15.410] [clip]

# [00:14:15.410] - Emma Ritch

I mean, there are so few women involved in economic decision making globally. There are only currently 18 female finance ministers within the government of sovereign states. Only one woman has ever won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. And we just don't see women around the economic and finance decision-making tables. But more importantly than women, I think we need people who have gender competence, which means that they understand the different ways that women's and men's lives are inflected by gender and the hierarchies and the absence of power and safety and economic security that gender causes. So we need the economy to work for all women. We know that Covid has had a disproportionate impact on Black and minority ethnic communities and women particularly. We need for our economic decision-making to take account of all of that and of course, to heavily use gender sensitive sex, disaggregated data.

[00:15:14.840] [clip ends]

[00:15:15.110] - Alys Mumford And housing....

[00:15:15.905] [clip]

# [00:15:16.040] - Liz Ely

There are lots of different, different things that need to happen in, sort of, many facets of housing. And I think, you know, women's equality needs to be, it needs to be always remembered as like really interlinked with housing at every point when it comes to policy decisions. I mean just on a base level, housing needs to be more affordable - so we need more social housing and rent controls and more regulation of private sector and better quality...all those sorts of things that would benefit everybody are very important for women. I think women can be forgotten, and making sure that those basic things around gender equality assessments of policy are very important. I know this is very much an Engender

[00:16:01.620] [laughter]

# [00:16:01.620] - Liz Ely

It's very much Engender's wheelhouse, but I remember particularly for a really specific policy wonky example, which seeing as this is an Engender podcast...

[00:16:11.880] - Alys Mumford

We love it, we love it.

# [00:16:15.510] - Liz Ely

Hopefully that's ok! When we were campaigning around the Private Tenancies Act, which brought about security of tenancy for private sector tenants, so it came in at about five years ago, basically meant that landlords had to have a grounds to evict a tenant. Right? And you could basically...It was basically like your tenancy was then permanent unless the landlord kicked you out, and that was going from a much more insecure regime before that. So that was, a bunch of campaigning around that happened. And the initial Living Rent campaign, I was very involved in that, and one of the things within that, when they were bringing out this new tenancy site was they wanted to keep in - at the beginning - a six month period where the tenant would be tied-in to the contract. And it was kind of a hangover from the previous tenancy type, but nobody had really thought about the fact that if you're a woman, you know, experiencing men's violence and you need to get out of the house and, you know, you would then have a financial burden of a six month tenancy and it - this six months was just put in there because it was part of the previous previous regime. And as part of that campaign, I was able to bring that up with the housing minister and bring it up in the committee, like specifically like "this would be very bad for women experiencing men's violence". And it was a strong argument and then the six month period came out and now there's no six month time period at the beginning. And that was really like, "it's really great that happened, I'm really pleased that that six months came out", but it's just an example of the fact that if that had been thought about a bit of an earlier stage and somebody had just said, you know, "what if somebody needs to leave the house because they're experiencing violence, maybe we shouldn't tie them in for six months". And if it had been an earlier point, it wouldn't have had to have been maybe a campaign point, you know?

[00:18:06.990] [clip ends]

[00:18:07.530] - Amanda Stanley And to join with Gender Equal Media to talk about reporting of domestic abuse during the lockdown:

[00:18:12.240] [clip]

[00:18:12.420] - Marsha Scott

In fact, calls to helplines in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland had dropped. And that's because it's women's lives, women's lives, women are living with domestic abuse, are also having to find loo paper, and trying to figure out what to do with these children who are not in school, and trying to figure out how to manage to deliver their work from home if they can be, and how to apply fulough money, and all of the things that women manage disproportionately in families and in their lives and women who are experiencing and living with domestic abuse are no different. So what we knew was that those first couple of weeks, they were highly unlikely to be calling a helpline if they could find a safe time and place to do it. And it was only after some of the new issues that had been solved that they were going to begin to problem solve. So we had women calling us from when they were walking the dog. We had a hugely increased use of webchat because we know you don't have to worry about being overheard, you could be sitting and watching television and looking like you're texting a friend, blah, blah, blah.

[00:19:26.073] [clip ends]

[00:19:26.460] - Alys Mumford And a partnership with the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls to discuss intersectional gender architecture:

[00:19:31.512] [clip]

# [00:19:31.620] - Ima Jackson

The way that the system creates the inequality that we're all working with and within and and against is that intersectionality in way supports us to demonstrate to the system itself what it does. And I think intersectionality sort of offers such an important understanding of how the different ways the system discriminates against you. And for, kind of, in the first time, it's all been framed around this world yes, intersectionality, but it gives a power to it, a force to it that I think generally the system had managed to disparate in that people with disability were over there, people with gender issues here, people with sexuality issues were there, people experiencing racism over there and in the system kind of creates a whole mechanism that people, in fact, often were - and I think this comes up a lot -were in a way competing against each other and the way the system discriminated against them. So to me, bringing in sort of intersectional thinking is an activist response to the system's own way of working itself around so-called equality or inequalities.

[00:19:31.620] [clip ends]

# [00:20:46.000] - Amanda Stanley

We really hope that you've enjoyed listening to the podcast in 2020. And if you missed any of those discussions, you can catch up with old episodes by subscribing to On the Engender, searching for it on Spotify or of course, heading to Engender.scot. Alys, what do we have in store for 2021?

# [00:21:02.830] - Alys Mumford

So we're excited to bring you more feminist discussion, of course, reflection and policy analysis this year. We'll be speaking to brilliant women and women's organisations as well about the work they do in Scotland and particularly how Covid-19 is changing that.

# [00:21:16.690] - Amanda Stanley

And something that I am really looking forward to, as always, is having a whole range of people on to discuss these issues, especially like you said with Covid-19, when we started the briefing that gave a whole incredible new angle to how we're discussing these issues that women are facing in Scotland. And I'm just really looking forward to seeing how this plays out because, you know, it feels like there's a lot to talk about in 2021.

# [00:21:41.230] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, for sure. Is a busy old year Scotland - May will, probably - at the time of recording, see the Scottish Parliament elections, so happening largely online and with more women than ever eligible to vote for the first time. So that's really exciting and something we'll be covering in the podcast. We're also hoping to see some significant bits of legislation moving through Holyrood, including incorporation of CEDAW, progress on the women's health plan and tougher action on our favourite topic of all: mainstreaming. So we'll be keeping you up to date on all of that as well. So, yeah, loads to look forward to, brilliant women coming on, hopefully hearing about organisations and hopefully hearing from from you all as well. Let us know what you think of the podcast. Let us know if there's things you want us to cover. So to close us out, looking back on a year, which feels like everything has changed and yet every day sort of feels the same, we thought it would be appropriate to leave you with some of Engender's founder members talking about the setting up of the Scottish Parliament, women's solidarity and looking to Europe, on our 'You'll have had yer feminism' podcast series.

# [00:22:41.860] - Esther Breitenbach

So I think no doubt that in the 1990s idea of the parliament did bring people together. But I do think the networking was always going on - the women's committees are probably central. and also that Scotland's quite a small country.

# [00:22:57.580] - Yvonne Strachan

Yes, I agree with that, but I think what was a precursor to the parliament having captured the imagination, was that there was an anti-Thatcher unity. So if you think that, because it's small and even though there was a sense...it was a whole bunch of things going on, like and alienation almost from government that it didn't represent, so the democratic deficit, which became the reason why, you

know, the parliament could capture that you know, get some currency, but that was happening on everything. So if you have women's committees in local government, you had you know, there was an energy around some trade union stuff - I'm not saying it was perfect - but the STUC committee was active, the women's organisations were active, and there was a sense that there was a common enemy, if you like, or in the broader context, which was, you know, something going on politically that wasn't supporting - whether it was industrial or in social rights or whatever, you know - so and that Europe, and this is the other interesting thing, was offering solutions on things like, you know, part time work, equal pay and so on. So you were you were having, you were almost seeing an answer in legislative terms somewhere else [voices talking over each other] But you're right, because it was small, I guess I don't know if this is right. My sense is that you get caught, you get caught in the energy of there is you know, we're all in a kind of boat of disenchantment with with something that's happening and feeling frustration. And so that kind of energizes you to want to find, you know, a change. So there was a change afoot just about every level.

[00:24:39.311] [clip ends]

[00:24:39.320] - Amanda Stanley

So that's it from us. And we'll be back soon with a new episode to kick start 2021. Until then, like we said, go back and listen to all the episodes that have been released up until now - the 'you'll have had yer feminism', and also check out the recommendations that we have on Engender on the blog, we have a whole host of things that we recommended over the year.

[00:25:00.550] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, that's been one of the nice things about having guests on and recommending feminist books, podcasts, films.

[00:25:08.030] - Amanda Stanley (lot of bake off)

[00:25:10.150] - Alys Mumford

Lot of bake off, some questionable food choices. Yeah, something for everyone, I think, probably in that blog. We'll link to that in the show notes as well.

[00:25:18.940] - Amanda Stanley Most definitely

[00:25:18.940] - Alys Mumford So we'll see you soon for the sort of new season of On the Engender and in the meantime, stay safe and we'll leave you with some laughs.

[00:25:27.550] [music bed] [clips]

[00:25:32.940] - Alys Mumford We have Emma Ritch Engender's Executive Director.

[00:25:35.460] - Emma Ritch Hello,

[00:25:37.440] - Alys Mumford ....sorry

[00:25:43.130] [laughter]

[00:25:43.130] - Emma Ritch

How is it possible that all me 'hellos' are ...?

[00:25:43.670] - Alys Mumford I left a gap Amanda! I left a gap!

[00:25:43.670] - Amanda Stanley I thought it was a really good hello

[00:25:43.670] - Emma Ritch I think Emma Trottier almost cried with laughter the first time I said hello. Starting to get a tiny complex.

[00:25:59.510] - Emma Ritch Oh yeah, that sounds like it's singing my song.

[00:26:02.280] [laughter]

[00:26:07.280] - Alys Mumford Wow, Emma, that's gonna go in the outtakes folder.

[00:26:07.340] [laughter]

[00:26:07.340] - Emma Ritch Oh I just love Marilyn Waring so much.

[00:26:07.910] - Alys Mumford Amazing, right Amanda will be getting on that.

[00:26:07.910] - Emma Ritch I'm gonna go before I embarrass myself yet further

[00:26:07.910] - Alys Mumford That could be the cold open for this episode: "I just love Marilyn Waring so much".

[00:26:13.720] - Amanda Stanley We have lost Alys.

[00:26:28.810] - Emma Ritch Oh, no, maybe the pigeon?

[00:26:30.650] - Alys Mumford Sorry, I'm just talking I was just...[laughter] I'm back I'm back, it's all done now. Apologies.

[00:26:34.760] - Emma Ritch If Alys's Twitter feed is just like a lot of pigeon...videos...of an adult nature...

[00:26:50.820] - Alys Mumford I think we all know what my recommendation is going to be at the end of the show.

[00:26:55.300] - Amanda Stanley We know why Alys loves Springwatch so much. [laughter]

[00:27:00.530] - Alys Mumford I do love Springwatch. Ok. and economic sucshess [rewind noise] . [00:27:04.300] - Amanda Stanley And we'll be back in a fortnight - is that how we close it out? I don't know

[00:27:06.860] - Emma Ritch Catch you on the flip side?

[00:27:12.040] - Alys Mumford I think last time I just went with 'stay safe'?

[00:27:14.520] - Amanda Stanley Stay safe? Shall we just stick with stay safe?

[00:27:17.340] - Alys Mumford I think I think you could just say whatever you want?

[00:27:19.690] - Amanda Stanley Stay alert? [laughter and voices talking over each other] And then I could do a Beyoncé siren?

[00:27:30.490] - Alys Mumford Catch you on the flip side [record scratches and DJ noises]...I'm never awkward what are you talking about?