

[00:00:22.410] - [VO]

Scottish Women and the Vote.

[00:00:30.190] - Alys Mumford

Hello, and welcome to the final episode of our miniseries, Scottish Women and the Vote with me, Alys Mumford. This episode brings us to the end of our exploration of the campaign to bring women the vote in Scotland and how we can work to ensure that no women are barred from our democratic processes today. In the last episode we heard about women whose right to vote is not being realised yet in Scotland. And this episode we'll look at some of the campaigns which have been successful over the past few years in extending the franchise to young people and to women experiencing domestic abuse. First though we'll be hearing from Emma Trottier about the right to vote of people in prison, which is currently something which doesn't happen in Scotland but which we hope to see changes in very soon.

[00:01:07.280]

[Jingle]

[00:01:11.690] - Alys Mumford

I'm sitting here with Emma Trottier, regular listeners of the podcast will remember Emma. She used to be our Policy and Parliamentary Manager here at Engender before heading back to her native Canada. She's due to be back in the UK to study a PhD in Sheffield University on criminal justice, specifically on the topic of remand. And so I grabbed her for a quick chat while she was here for a flying visit. Hi, Emma.

[00:01:31.550] - Emma Trottier

Hi, Alys. Nice to be back.

[00:01:33.110] - Alys Mumford

So we're talking all about voting in this podcast series and wanted to chat to you about the rights of people in prison to vote. So why is it important that people in prison should be able to vote?

[00:01:43.730] - Emma Trottier

I certainly think it's important that people in prison be able to vote. But I also think that there are questions that we need to ask around what is the objective of prison? Is it to deny a person's right to liberty or is it to punish? And I often think about a common saying we have in Canada and likely other places as well, is that you go to prison as punishment, not for punishment. So prison is the punishment. But I also think there are questions around the functions and powers of the state and whether the elected should choose the electorate. And I wish I was eloquent enough to come up with that on my own. But that's actually what the European Court of Human Rights has said on the issue of prisoner voting that the elected don't get to choose the electorate.

[00:02:36.170] - Alys Mumford

So currently in Scotland, we do have that situation where prisoners are not currently able to vote. But this is something that the Scottish government has been looking at. Emma, you appeared at the inquiry into prisoner voting held by the Equality and Human Rights Committee, giving evidence based on the Canadian experience. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:02:55.910] - Emma Trottier

When I first heard that the Equality and Human Rights Committee was doing a study exploring prisoner voting in Scotland, I wrote to them and basically outlined what I knew had happened in Canada and wanting to share more information with them. So they invited me to appear, and I was able to share the Canadian experience of prisoner voting, where Canada went from an absolute ban on prisoner voting to allowing some prisoners to vote, to then in 2002 eliminating the blanket ban on prisoner voting and allowing all prisoners the right to vote in elections. And so I went before them and shared that information. And why I thought it was pivotal that prisoners be able to vote.

[00:03:40.670] - Alys Mumford

One thing that the conversation seems to have focused on quite a lot here in Scotland has been on the public perception of the rights of people in prison to vote, and on some of the practicalities around voting itself, around election literature. And I'm sure we would say that that is probably the wrong focus. But do you have any thoughts on those questions?

[00:04:00.830] - Emma Trottier

That seemed to be, for some members on the Equality and Human Rights Committee, that was a big question was public perception, and there seems to be a lot of concern around what the public might think if we extended the franchise to prisoners. And for me, it goes back again to that question of punishment and how far we want to go. And some people will say that when someone has broken the law, they're no longer able to decide who makes the law. But we have in prisons a very vulnerable population who are subject to all of the penal policies that government comes up with yet have no control or say over the rights and regulations that dictate their daily lives in prison or the lives of their families outside of prison. So I think to me that's what we should be focused on is educating people on why it's important for prisoners to be able to vote, not just for what's happening to them on a daily basis inside prison, but also the lives of their families and friends that are still in the communities that they've come from.

[00:05:07.790] - Alys Mumford

One thing we heard in last episode when chatting to Eilidh was that the right to vote and the government's responsibility to give people a vote isn't just about the act of voting. It's about further engagement in the political process. And you talked about prisoners as being a vulnerable population. And we've spoken previously about women in prison being particularly vulnerable. And we also know that women are furthest from our democratic processes in Scotland, if you look at elected representation of women is very, very low. So is there a gendered aspect to all of this?

[00:05:41.030] - Emma Trottier

I think yes. We're never quite sure we know that a number of women coming into prison are mothers. The figures that we have are lower than what we think they are because a lot of mothers don't want to disclose that they have children, fearing what might happen if they do tell the state that they have children that they're leaving behind. So I think what happens is when you deny them the right to vote, they lose the ability to decide what's happening in their communities and what laws, regulations, policies are going to influence their children while they're incarcerated. So certainly there's a gender element to prisoner voting, absolutely.

[00:06:22.850] - Alys Mumford

And it seems like by denying people in prison the right to vote, we are essentially saying that they have no life outside of prison. They have no concern with what happens in the wider world. And we've talked before about the placing of prisons being out of the way, sort of out of sight, out of mind. But the official, I suppose, line on prisons here is about rehabilitation, about reintroduction of society. So how would voting link in with that?

[00:06:48.470] - Emma Trottier

I think it's important for people in prison to maintain that link to community. Yeah, so it goes back to how you see the objective of prison. Is it to punish or is it to rehabilitate and reintegrate? Because if it's to punish, then sure, then lock them up, throw away the key. But what we have learned is that that's an ineffective way of dealing with people who have broken the law. More effective way is to rehabilitate and successfully reintegrate so that they don't go on to break laws. They go on to be law-abiding citizens. And being a law-abiding citizen means having engagement with your community. And I think giving people the ability to exercise their democratic right to vote and be able to fulfil their civic duty is a way of ensuring that you're rehabilitating and successfully reintegrating.

[00:07:41.690] - Alys Mumford

Just to flip back to the sort of lessons learnt from the Canadian experience on this. I think you often hear two arguments when it comes to prisoner voting, and one is a fear that somehow as soon as people in prison are given the right to vote, they will vote for the candidate that promises to close all prisons and they'll be able to completely dominate our elections and they'll vote for the Sideshow Bob,

if anyone's seen that Simpsons episode. Or conversely, you hear that they - people in prison don't want to vote anyway, they won't bother voting. So it doesn't matter if they have the right. Obviously, two totally different ends of the spectrum. Has any of that played out in Canada?

[00:08:19.010] - Emma Trottier

That was certainly a concern that was shared by politicians in Canada when all prisoners were given the right to vote by the Supreme Court of Canada that overturned the ban. But we in Canada have countered that by building a voting scheme for prisoners whereby prisoners don't vote in the riding where their prison is located, they vote in the riding of their last address, last known address, or if they don't have one, which is the case of many - in the riding where they were sentenced to imprisonment, so where the courthouse was located. So they vote in different ridings across Canada, and that was done one, to try and keep that link to the community that they've come from, but also to dispel any myths that prisoners were going to be able to dictate who the elected official is going to be in the riding of the prison. When it comes to the concern of lack of voting, our statistics in Canada show that prisoners vote as much, or as many numbers, as the general public, so they do exercise their democratic right during each election.

[00:09:31.370] - Alys Mumford

So finally in Scotland, as we've heard, there was the inquiry by the Equality and Human Rights Commission who recommended that the right to vote should be extended to people in prisons. Following that, the Scottish government said that they had no immediate plans to extend the franchise or change the law, but they have just had a consultation. The consultation was largely focused on whether the right to vote should be tied in with length of sentence, which is something Engender's response said, absolutely not. It should be extended to all people in prison. But we hope to see progress on this in Scotland in the coming months. What would be your hopes for extension of the franchise for people in prison in Scotland?

[00:10:08.930] - Emma Trottier

I think that it would extend to everyone no matter the length of sentence that you have. I think putting the right to vote or tying the right to vote to a length of sentence is incredibly arbitrary. Certainly in Canada, when our Supreme Court looked at prisoner voting, that's exactly what they said in terms of tying the right to vote to a sentence length was an unjustified decision by the Government. And I'm hoping that through testimony that I've given, written evidence that others will have given, that the Scottish government will decide to eliminate the ban entirely and let every prisoner exercise their democratic right.

[00:10:48.120]

[Jingle]

[00:10:52.890] - Alys Mumford

Thanks to Emma for that. And if you're interested in this issue, we'll link to Engender's consultation response on the question of prisoner voting in the show notes. Next up, we'll hear from Suki Wan, chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament, about their successful campaign to extend voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds.

[00:11:07.490]

[Jingle]

[00:11:12.550] - Alys Mumford

I'm here with Suki Wan, who's member of the Scottish Youth Parliament for Glasgow Shettleston and the chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament, and we're here in their offices to chat about what the Scottish Youth Parliament is and particularly about their Votes at 16 campaign. So, hi Suki.

[00:11:26.110] - Suki Wan

Hi!

[00:11:26.890] - Alys Mumford

Can you just tell us a little bit about - a background about you, about the Parliament and about the campaign?

[00:11:33.550] - Suki Wan

So, I have been a member of the Scottish Parliament since 2015 for Glasgow Shettleston. I was vice-chair previously, and I'm now chair for this year. So we have Scottish Parliament, we're the democratically elected voice of 14 to 25 year olds across Scotland. You can tell I've practised that line many times. [Laughter]. So what we do is we run campaigns every single year on different issues. And one of the ones that we had most recently was Votes at 16, and that was around campaigning for 16 and 17 year olds in Scotland to get the vote in local elections. And of course, that is always a topical subject, given that we're still not able to vote in the UK elections. So while that campaign is technically over, it's still ongoing.

[00:12:12.730] - Alys Mumford

Why did you pick that as the campaign? Why is that so important that people at 16 can vote?

[00:12:16.930] - Suki Wan

I think there was that real appetite, I think, given that around the time it was with, you know, the referendum and then we had the Brexit referendum vote coming up after that. So there was a real sort of appetite in the air for 16 and 17 year olds who had a taste of democracy but then almost felt like they had it taken away straight afterwards. And I think there's also that recognition that 16 and 17 year olds have a lot of responsibility in other ways, such as they're able to get married, they pay taxes, they can join the army, but they can't exercise their democratic right to vote for who is running their country. So I think there's a lot of different reasons, but that's really why.

[00:12:52.330] - Alys Mumford

I'm interested that you say that the Parliament is from 14 year olds, but the campaign was for 16. Was there anyone that was keen people younger than 16 getting the vote?

[00:13:00.430] - Suki Wan

I don't think so. I mean, there probably is someone out there, but I've not come across them, but I think the reason that we are like representative of such a wide range of ages is that you don't hit 16, or 18 in terms of the UK, and just suddenly you're switched on with politics. I think that political journey or the involvement in civic life has to start from way before that, so that you're able to come to that point where you're like, I'm ready to vote. I know what I'm voting for, who I'm voting for, and why I'm voting. So - it would be quite interesting to have like a debate on votes at 14, but I think we need to get the votes at 16 conversation over and done with in the first place, yeah.

[00:13:39.070] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, absolutely. And you mentioned that there's other barriers than just being able to turn up to the ballot box - you talked about education and sort of engagement. What else do you think needs to happen to make sure young people are full parts of our democratic process?

[00:13:53.230] - Suki Wan

I think a lot of it has to do with representation and seeing role models in politics. So I think that for myself, I know that for my family, so I'm from an ethnically Chinese background and my family don't really connect with politics because it's for white people. That's what they say it is. And I can imagine for young people, a lot of it is old, white men in suits. And I think that's an image that, you know, people are trying to change, and I can see people are actively trying to work on it. But there's still a lot of young people where it quite hasn't reached through yet. So I think there's an aspect of both education but then there's also the outreach and engagement, so that it's people that look like us, that sound like us and that can relate to us, that are making the decisions, not just like, you know, the old white men in suits. I'm sure they're great. [Laughter]. But yeah, you know.

[00:14:37.690] - Alys Mumford

But just a few too many of them, ey. [Laughter]. So within the Scottish Youth Parliament, which obviously is a democratic body, how do you ensure that intersectionality and women particularly -

we're a feminist organisation - have that voice and have that say?

[00:14:54.250] - Suki Wan

Well, I'm actually really proud of the demographics we have as an organisation. We're almost - well actually I think we are almost gender balanced, and I think we've had the past four or five chairs in recent years have all been women. It's something that we've been working quite hard on, but we do take quite a lot of steps to make sure that we are representing all groups. So we represent young people in the local constituency areas. So that's for each of the 32 local authority areas. But we also have MSYPs from voluntary organisations. So we have members from Girl Guiding, from Scouts, from Boys' Brigade, from Scripture Union, from LGBT Youth Scotland and from Haggeye as well, so that we make sure that we hit those groups who maybe quite aren't as able to command a vote in sort of like a local area.

[00:15:44.030] - Speaker 2

So that makes sure - that means that we do have two young women from Girl Guiding Scotland, who are able to bring in those views from the organisation and bring in that unique expertise. So in a way, it's guaranteeing that we have that voice from that sort of minority group. And it's really important, like our LGBT Youth MSYPs, they are absolutely vital when we're looking at policies and looking at consultations around, like, for example, Gender Recognition Act, LGBT bullying in schools. So I think there's a real power in actually going to groups that you know that you can represent better and saying, we need you - like, we need your voice.

[00:16:19.130] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, one thing that I think is interesting and also frustrating is when you do get people elected, so women elected, they're always women politicians or young people. We see Mhairi Black being a really classic example, always just talked about as young - or Ross Greer in the Scottish Parliament as being young. That's the sort of main thing people hear about. But as you say, with representation, people bring different issues to the table and different perspectives. Are there any sort of issues you mentioned, obviously the GRA reforms, but other things where, you know, young people's voices have brought a different perspective to the conversation?

[00:16:47.330] - Suki Wan

I actually think there's quite a lot, I mean, the thing that I've been kind of working on well, not most recently, but for a while has been around Equally Safe. And I think something that's quite interesting is bringing around that digital aspect of it because I think a lot of sexual harassment or bullying behaviours actually take place online for women in terms of like inappropriate messages, in terms of online harassment, online stalking. And I think that's something that's a little bit more unique to young people, in that we are a lot more comfortable in that online space. I remember sitting around like a round table with folk from like Police Scotland and from the Procurator Fiscal's Office. And I brought up catfishing and someone kind of just stuck their hand up and they were like - excuse me, can I ask what catfishing is? And I was like, you work for the police! But obviously that's maybe just coming from me, like something that I'm a lot more familiar with because of my age and the people that I know and the fact that there's like a whole MTV show on catfishing. So it's absolutely not the fault of anyone in those positions. But I think there's definitely areas that are just sort of a lot more open to young people. So I think, like a policeman or someone high up in the justice system who's maybe 40-50 years old. I doubt they would have Snapchat or I doubt that they would have Instagram and be using, like, Instagram messages to talk to people, so. I'd say the digital or online aspect of a lot of issues is something that's quite unique for young people.

[00:18:21.110] - Alys Mumford

I think that's really interesting. Lots of the things that, yeah, millennials are criticised for are actually huge strengths. So yeah, we understand social media. We know how to Google for stuff, you know [Laughter] - all these things that are sort of seen as character flaws sometimes actually mean we understand what's going on in the world, so. I mean, you talk there about violence against women, which obviously is still a huge issue here in Scotland, and something that organisations are still doing great and very necessary work on. The reason we're doing this podcast is because there's been lots of celebrations this year about some women getting the vote in Scotland, and that is often seen as -

obviously was a significant post in women's equality. But it's not a done deal. And that's one of the reasons we're exploring the barriers that still exist to the democratic process. But what do you see as the biggest challenges for women's equality and particularly for young women in Scotland today?

[00:19:11.510] - Suki Wan

There's so many different answers I think you could have to that question, but I think going back to the sort of intersectionality thing, I think a lot of people can fail to see the ways in which other inequalities can be impacted by gender. For example, I would say, for ethnic minority women, there's a lot of honour based violence. There's a lot of racially motivated violence as well against women in ways that are a little bit more niche or slightly less understood by mainstream services or mainstream advocacy systems. I think that there's a lot of learning and a lot of understanding still to take place. But I think right now we're a very key turning point where we know that education is able to make a change. We know that education is key to changing the opinions and the culture that people have around certain subjects. And I think that if we are able to really take initiative with things like Equally Safe in schools and educate our young people about how to be respectful to people of all genders, how to actually enter into safe relationships and how to conduct ourselves as normal human beings. I think that there's a real cornerstone moment I think there for society, but yeah, I think it's a difficult question. I could probably spend about 2 hours just trying to think of different ways in which we're facing issues with gender right now. But yeah, I think there's also with the whole Me Too movement and with the sort of - the bigger public awareness now or the bigger public conversation or discussion on sexual harassment, on acceptable behaviours in the workplace - that could go either way. I think that could either go in a very productive way or helpful way in which we are moving forward as a society or we end up in that other like, oh, we can't talk to women anymore because it's harassment. So, I think there's a lot of calculation and strategy that needs to be taking place going forward.

[00:21:10.350] - Alys Mumford

Finally, just to, I guess, go back to the sort of Votes at 16 campaign and obviously the fight to give young people - 16 year olds, 17 year olds a voice which they now have in elections in Scotland. But as you say, they don't in the UK, what difference do you think that would make in a UK context if 16 and 17 year olds were able to vote - both for young people, but also for politics in the UK?

[00:21:30.870] - Suki Wan

I mean, I think it would see a difference in the candidates that we have in terms of parliament because obviously, if you're able to vote, you're also able to stand. So I think that having an interest in politics or having that knowledge of politics a little bit earlier on would encourage a lot more younger people to stand as MPs, as local councillors, and their elections. But I think it would have made quite a difference in terms of votes and things like Brexit as well, because we're aware that the opinion among younger people was quite different to those of older folk and the Brexit referendum, particularly for us in Scotland. But it would have been really interesting to see how that worked out if 16 and 17 year olds in England and Wales and Ireland, had been able to have that vote, because I think over here it was quite a large majority of young people voted to remain in the European Union. But I suppose that's all in the past now - I mean there's not too much point talking about what -

[00:22:30.750] - Alys Mumford

So this is being recorded on the 5th December, so we don't - who knows what will happen by the time the podcast goes out? [Laughter]

[00:22:37.590] - Suki Wan

Yeah, absolutely. Who knows. But yeah, I think there is definitely a difference between the way in which the older generation and in which the younger generation vote. And I think it's very important to think about the fact that it is our future and it's going to be our jobs, our education, the way that we live our lives, is going to be really impacted in the way that our politics moves. So, yeah, there's so many different possibilities and so many unknown variables to explore with young people in voting. But I think either way, it would end up more beneficial for society, if our young people could have a greater voice.

[00:23:15.870] - Suki Wan

Fantastic, thank you. And is there anything else you want to say? Thoughts that sparked, questions you might want to ask?

[00:23:21.450] - Suki Wan

I think you've raise a really interesting point about how the anniversary of women getting the vote has been quite celebrated and been quite a big thing, but it's really important to recognise that not everyone has received that vote. And I think there's a lot of groups in our modern day society that still aren't able to vote. I think it is quite a contentious topic for a lot of things, but I think there's also quite a lot of barriers to voting that people need to recognise, as well as particularly for ethnic minority communities, for immigrant communities who perhaps don't have that language support, don't have candidates reaching out to them at all because they don't think their vote matters as much. But I think even for those young people who are 16 and 17 and able to vote in Scottish elections, there still quite isn't that strong outreach from some politicians, I think, to them. So I think that while our campaign for Votes at 16 was successful in terms of actually getting that vote, there's still work to be done in terms of that political literacy, that engagement and that - you know, bringing the vote to the people and making sure that they know that they have that power.

[00:24:21.520]

[Jingle]

[00:24:25.810] - Alys Mumford

Finally, I chatted to Louise Johnson at Scottish Women's Aid about the vital work they did to ensure that women experiencing domestic abuse aren't excluded from Scotland's democratic processes.

[00:24:35.130]

[Jingle]

[00:24:39.290] - Alys Mumford

I'm sitting here with Louise Johnson. Louise is the National Worker for Legal Issues Policy at Scottish Women's Aid. Hi, Louise!

[00:24:45.350] - Louise Johnson

Hi there. Hi, nice to see you.

[00:24:47.210] - Alys Mumford

So, part of this podcast series we're doing is all about the right to vote and how there's been a lot of celebrations of 100 years since some women gained the right to vote, but actually still in 2019, many women are excluded from the democratic processes. Can you talk a little bit about what the link is between domestic abuse and the right to vote?

[00:25:05.930] - Louise Johnson

Sure. Well, you have to have an address, and if you leave, obviously your home and go into refuge, therefore, you can lose that connection. And especially if, say, the registration coming out you know for a local council election or a Westminster election, Scottish Parliament or European, and you can lose the connection with your home. But also, if you go into refuge, women are reluctant, because it's a temporary accommodation, to sign up, and they're also reluctant to sign up if they get re-housed after that, in case they get found. And what people still don't realise there is a facility called anonymous voter registration. Now we fought, I would say one of our most interesting campaigns for nearly ten years, to have women in Scotland properly represented by this policy. And what it does is allows you to go to your electoral registration officer and say, I'm experiencing domestic abuse, I want to register to vote anonymously. So what happens is your name is taken out the main register and it's held on a sort of secret one, so nobody gets access to it. Nobody knows you're there at all. And your address isn't public. And you can do that by going to social work or the police, and they can attest and also Women's Aid can do this. They can more or less give a declaration that you're seeking, you know, you're known to them as it were - and seeking support. But also and most importantly, if you have a civil protective order, an interdict, keeping someone away from you, I can't remember if exclusion orders are also included, but certainly interdicts. That's sort of what they would call prima facie

evidence, that is you know - first class evidence that you need this. And that was what we fought nearly ten years with what was in Scotland Office to get it, because way back in 2000, I think even before I started, about 2004 certainly, Westminster were consulting on how they could best protect women.

[00:26:59.210] - Louise Johnson

So they decided they were going to have certain protective, civil protective orders, that would passport you to this process. And also they were going to do this sort of validation, you know, giving a declaration. And they decided that Scottish protective orders, because they weren't governed by statute, they were all governed by mostly - not all of them - by common law. It was a bit too difficult [Laughter] - a bit kind of, you know - a bit sketchy about what we're going at. And they said women can just - even if they've got a common law interdict, they can just go and get it attested. And we said, I don't think so. And I think they thought that we would go away, which was a very, very foolish thing to think [Laughter]. So we really just kept at it saying, you know, this is terrible. Women in Scotland don't have the same protection. They've got these orders, you can't use them. You're really being discriminatory and very dismissive towards Scottish courts. And eventually they relented. So now if you've got a protective order, you can use that. But also the recent changes at Westminster and Scottish Government - Scottish Parliament - round about voter registration, Women's Aid organisations, the managers can actually attest that you're been supported by the organisation, which is extremely important because some women don't go anywhere near the police, as we know. Domestic abuse is not reported and you don't want to go and, you know, really engage with social work, because that opens up all sorts of other cans of worms for women. So if you're being supported by an organisation that is regarded as a respected partner, you know, why not?

[00:28:33.710] - Alys Mumford

It sounds so familiar [Laughter] to so many other areas of legislation where a) having to remind the UK Government that Scotland is different in some regards with the justice system and also yeah, the police and social services are not necessarily the first port of call for many women in these situations. So that was obviously a huge success, but also a huge fight. Can you remember any of the things that Scottish Women's Aid or local groups were doing to try and push that issue?

[00:29:03.470] - Louise Johnson

Not going away. We just kept on and on at Westminster, the Home Office - it was Jim Wallace at the time who was the - I think he was the - was it the Attorney General? God, I can never remember. Maybe not - or the Advocate General, one of the two. I'm sorry, I can never remember. But it was a particular legal post advising Westminster Government, and we had a meeting with him and more or less said, look, Jim - they said it was really not good enough. And he said, you're right [Laughter]. And I remember the civil servants were horrified because we didn't quite slap the table, but it wasn't like a [inaudible 00:29:37] moment [Laughter]. It wasn't far off it. And they were just appalled that there's this crowd and this, you know, women's organisation facing down, essentially a Minister and said, we need to do something about this. And he just said, yes, we do. And that was the thing. They just seem to think they just keep making it as difficult as physically possible or just not answering. And we did some really fairly complicated work, sending emails and the discussion papers and their position and very technical terms. So it wasn't as like we were doing three word, you know, Noddy's Guide - and they were coming back with equally technical challenges, and we were responding to that. And I think if they annoyed about it [Laughter]. But as they said, they should have known. We didn't come up the Clyde on a biscuit. And that was really good because I think they eventually thought they do know what they're talking about and we're not going to go away. And that also, I think for me, was quite indicative of the fact that, you know, we have expertise we know what we're talking about, we have the rights of women behind us. And also we're not going to go away. And that's one of the strengths of Women's Aid, we don't go away.

[00:30:46.430] - Alys Mumford

I mean, one of the things that strikes me listening, although there obviously are technical aspects to this, the basic issue sounds fairly common sense. We want people to vote. People aren't able to vote without this anonymous voter registration. In this podcast, we've been talking to folk about the rights of people in prison to vote, the rights of trans people. And again, there seem to be fairly common

sense solutions that aren't being taken up by the Government because they talk about really sort of technical problems they could foresee or other concerns. Was that a case that people worried this would be misused?

[00:31:18.110] - Louise Johnson

Oh, yes, I think what was worrying them was that people who were up to - sort of shenanigans - most I would say fraud, bankruptcy, et cetera. Would use it as a way to keep the name off the electoral registration register, because obviously credit reference agencies and so on and so forth are allowed access to the main register. I don't think they can just automatically get access to the anonymous voter register. I think there has to be a specific request, but certainly, as an individual, I can request the commercial register, which councils can sell on.

[00:31:56.930] - Louise Johnson

My name is kept off that, but say credit reference companies can check the main one. So obviously if someone's trying to avoid being found by a credit reference agency or a debt agency or the police - the theory was that they could suddenly make this plea, and I think that was part of it. But we did say, do you really think you're going to be engulfed by this tidal wave of people, not just women, people generally claiming that they are experiencing domestic abuse in order to get around say bankruptcy provisions or debt provisions, where they're going to have to engage with the police or social work, so they're going to put themselves in another process.

[00:32:40.310] - Louise Johnson

It's not going to be seamless for them, so they're going to come to someone's attention, I think just because also they just really - it's a bit difficult for them, I think, having to consider the varies of Scot's law because it wasn't a statute. You've got the marital homes interdicts - the matrimonial homes interdict for married people. And there were interdicts - this is after the 2006 reforms for people who are cohabiting, but it just seemed - if you weren't you know, it was a bit difficult, they said it's not really that difficult. Then we had to go through the process afterwards. This was 2013. They eventually decided to amend the Representation of the People Legislation and we had to go and dig out styles of interdict with every variation of what it could be. We had to make sure that these were - we had to eat them afterwards you know, but they said to make sure they were redacted - and what a performance - just to prove this is some of the things you could get and they're all very much of a same. It's like you will not approach Louise Johnson at this address, that address or children or don't do this the next thing. I mean, they don't get terribly creative, so they're all standard, but it just seemed to be such a performance. There were sort of situate - there were times I sat there and thought - won't believe this. [Laughter]

[00:34:01.250] - Alys Mumford

Well, thank goodness for Women's Aid not giving up. So obviously that long running successful campaign has made a difference. We know that there are still lots of barriers to all women from taking part in the Democratic process. Are there any other things that you think need to change specifically to enable women with experience of domestic abuse to take part in these processes?

[00:34:22.550] - Louise Johnson

The Scottish Government - I said Westminster - consulted on this last year, and one of the things we asked them to do was to expand the category of person who could attest. Now there are other reforms for the life of me I can't quite remember what they are, but I think there may be an issue round about women with uncertain immigration status in terms of registering to vote anyway. But what we want to make sure is regardless of where women are and also young people, because your anonymous voter registration can also cover other individuals in the household, but also young people can apply themselves.

[00:34:58.730] - Louise Johnson

The most important thing is understanding, I think the importance of voting, what voting means - your democratic right to go and appoint a representative and various parliaments, various, you know, your local authority - who's supposed to represent you. Now, that sometimes can be interesting, as we've seen recently, the concept of representing voters. But I think it's a very - I think important thing in

relation to achieving equality. When you look at the history of voting and you know, it was land owners and you had rotten boroughs, et cetera. And you couldn't qualify unless you had money.

[00:35:39.170] - Louise Johnson

And then men got the vote and they were willing to give the vote to abusive men who really didn't have any particular qualification of anything. And then it was so difficult and then women got it - and to fight for social change and to have your voice heard. I mean, you can't be in it, if you're not in it you know? And I keep saying to people, it's really important that you vote because also you can go along and harass your local representative. If you don't want to vote for whatever reason, you still have someone who represents you and going along and poking them with a stick and saying, why are you doing this? I'm not happy with this, get them to justify themselves. They work for us, which I keep pointing out to people. They work for you, they work for us. And holding them accountable, and therefore the people who make the legislation, who make the rules generally that guide our everyday lives and can improve them or make it worse and being able to challenge them. But also, I think to feel part of it, you know, to feel part of I think the process to say, "well, I voted, I did this and I played my part" and I keep saying to people, this was hard won, really hard won.

[00:36:51.350] - Louise Johnson

You think about the votes women - suffragettes and suffragists all the way through that to actually get it. And it's not something - and you look at countries where women are denied the vote or where your vote counts for less and then fair enough, I mean, they're not particularly good in themselves, but they also reflect a poor standard of gender equality. And a country really that actually holds women in stead, in good standing and recognises that women have a right, an equal right - social, political, financial participation always said that, therefore is actually indicating that they take gender equality seriously and therefore women actually are equal.

[00:37:42.310]

[Jingle]

[00:37:47.730] - Alys Mumford

That's it from this miniseries. We really hope you've enjoyed listening along on this journey to discover the history of women's voting in Scotland and what changes still need to come. Next up On the Engender is a project we've been working on for the last few months, You'll Have Had Yer Feminism. This documentary podcast hosted by our fantastic producer Amanda Stanley, explores the history of Engender and the women's movement in Scotland over the past 25 years. Stay tuned after the outro for a sneak peek. That's it for now from me, thanks so much for listening.

[00:38:20.590] - Amanda Stanley

This episode of On the Engender was hosted by Alys Mumford and featured the voices of Emma Trottier, Suki Wan and Louise Johnson. The episode was produced by Amanda Stanley on behalf of Engender, and the jingle featured throughout was written, produced and remixed, especially for this miniseries by Bossy Love. You can follow Engender on Twitter @EngenderScot and join in the conversation by using the hashtag #OnTheEngender.

[00:38:44.130]

[Jingle]

[00:39:32.390] - Nicola Sturgeon

For 25 years now, Engender has been a hugely important voice for feminism and for gender equality in our country. This organisation has been truly instrumental in helping to bring about changes in policy, in legislation, and even more important, and often even more difficult, changes in attitudes. Changes that have helped women the length and breadth of Scotland. And as a result of that, I think everybody associated with Engender can take real pride in knowing that you have contributed to making Scotland a better, a fairer, and a more equal nation.

[00:40:11.070] - Amanda Stanley

Hello and welcome to Engender's brand new podcast, You'll Have Had Yer Feminism. My name is

Amanda Stanley and in this special series marking 25 years of Engender, I will be delving deep into the organisation's history, from its humble beginnings to where it stands now within the wider women's movement in Scotland. Join me as I talk to prominent feminists from across the length and breadth of the country, from original founding members to fellow women's organisations, and individual activists leading change today. Throughout the series, expect to hear stories surrounding everything from the struggles Engender has faced in its 25 years.

[00:40:46.350] - Sue Robertson

The model, that Engender started off with, there was some wealthy women putting in money and other people contributing what they could, had quite a long tail over the years because there was an issue from early on, of Engender being seen as a rather elitist organisation and because initially membership fees were quite high because we were trying to raise money by that means. And one of the kind of tensions that was around in the early stages was trying to kind of be as successful as possible to women throughout Scotland, but also trying to have the money to do the things that we were doing.

[00:40:46.830] - Amanda Stanley

As well as many memories and anecdotes from individuals who have been involved throughout the organisation's lifetime.

[00:40:52.410] - Fiona Forsyth

Some of the Trinidadian women would come and sit on our stall. And then the Scottish politicians would kind of gravitate over thinking, oh, these women look interesting. And then at that point, the women would corner them and say- you, what party are you from? You're in Scotland - are you in favour of 5050 in the Scottish Parliament? What are you doing about it? And they were like, ah! You must buy this gender audit. It's normally, you know, five pound - but ten pound to you! You know, it was just hilarious! [Laughter] It was really excellent.

[00:41:23.350] - Amanda Stanley

Follow Engender on Twitter @EngenderScot to keep up to date with news about the photography exhibition that will be coinciding with this series. For more information, head to engender.org.uk and be sure to hit subscribe now to ensure you never miss an episode.

[00:41:38.590] - [Preview]

Engender was conceived in an explosion of anger and frustration. When women got together and expressed their feelings of powerlessness, disenfranchisement and disenchantment. Out of this was born the resolve to engender more action on women's issues and to create support and an information network for the fragmented activity, which was growing again in the late 80s. Many groups of women come together in the same circumstances because the existing structures and procedures do not answer needs. Women form self-help groups to fight illness, to help care for others and to enable them to work. And we fight and lobby governments in an effort to have our needs in these areas recognised and met, they have yet to be recognised.

[00:42:45.660]

[Jingle plays out]