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Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: Unable to decipher = (ia + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** = (ph + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode).

Moderator: It's Monday 18th October 2019. I'm with Ros Bragg. Ros is director at Maternity Action. Maternity Action is the UK's leading charity, committed to ending inequality and improving the health and wellbeing of pregnant women, partners and young children. Ros is going to share with us her experience of working in the sector and campaigning for women's rights as part of the Sisters Doing It For Themselves archive. Over to you, Ros. If you can share with us what influenced you to work in the sector.

Ros Bragg: That's a big question. I think I've always been conscious of the different treatment of women, compared to men, and the way in which that really limited women's lives. Certainly, when I was growing up, the expectation was that I'd study hard and go to university and get my degree, but then would stay home and look after children, and I think that prompted me to really pay attention to gender inequality. My job in the summer, between school and university, I worked in a factory, making venetian blinds, and it was completely sex-segregated. It was very sex segregated, and men got paid more than women. There was really no significant difference between the jobs. The explanation was that they had heavier work, but even as a skinny eighteen-year-old, it was very clear to me that it wasn't more difficult work than the work that we were doing as young women, but it was better paid. I think that's really where my interest in women's economic independence really picked up, this sense that work is segregated into women's work and men's work, and women's work tends to be badly paid, and remains so, throughout women's careers. So, I really started off with an interest in that, but then, through university, really picked up on questions of the social welfare system and the access women have to housing, to healthcare, to the basic public services that they do need to have.

Particularly if they're struggling financially, but I think, looking at poverty and disadvantage is really about looking at women, because women are overwhelmingly represented in low-income groups, and really, if you start looking at those questions of women's economic independence, you are looking at poverty and disadvantage. Then, that's how I ended up working in the voluntary sector, looking at those questions. I did have a brief period of working for my local MP in the New South Wales state parliament in Sydney, Australia, and that, I think, gave me a good sense of the importance of the voluntary organisations, because there were industry bodies. Well resources industry bodies, which were lobbying parliamentarians, quite successfully, to create laws and policies which benefited those industries, but really left those people who were much less powerful profoundly disadvantaged. It was the very badly funded voluntary organisations that represented renters or, really, any people in low incomes, who are able to, sort of, challenge those quite powerful

institutions. So, I felt quite enthusiastic about moving into roles in the voluntary organisations where I could actually make that change.

Moderator: How long were you working for your MP before you decided to move into the voluntary sector, and have you had any spells in the private sector?

Ros Bragg: No spells in the private sector. I worked for my MP for two years, Clover Moore, she's now the Lord Mayor of Sydney, and I worked for her while there was a minority government, and she held balance of power, that's a really interesting period of time. I worked briefly for a local authority, before moving into the voluntary sector. I worked for Shelter, New South Wales, which was the state shelter organisation in Australia, and then to the New South Wales Council of Social Service, which was a big body, an umbrella body, for voluntary organisations in New South Wales, Australia. So, I spent about seven years there. I did a brief stint for ICAC, the Independent Commission Against Corruption in Australia, which was a civil service role, working to prevent corruption in public sector. Fascinating work, but also quite frustrating, I found. So, when I moved to the UK, I went straight back into work in the voluntary sector, working briefly for a group called Maternity Alliance, before setting up Maternity Action.

Moderator: Were you the founder member of Maternity Action?

Ros Bragg: Yes, I was. Yes. No, I'd taken a maternity cover role at Maternity Alliance when I first arrived in the UK. It was head of policy information and campaigns. They weren't a particularly well-managed organisation, and they become insolvent six months after I started working for them, which was a real disaster. It was a much-needed service, doing some really effective work. So, I think, when they shut down, I carried forward one of the projects with, based at another voluntary organisation, as another few people did, and we expected that other groups would pick up the work of Maternity Alliance, but that didn't happen. So, a few years later, I think, there was a discussion about setting up a new organisation to, sort of, focus on the needs of pregnant women and new mothers, and so that's where Maternity Action came about.

Moderator: What year did you start Maternity Action?

Ros Bragg: I think we incorporated in the month in which the Lehman Brothers collapse took place. So, it was an astoundingly badly-timed commencement. So, we started up in a very small way, with a very part-time person working in an office, that was me initially, and then picked up very small amounts of money that kept us going for a few years. We're now, I think, twelve years, running twelve years now, but I think, given that we'd started up after the crash, it took quite a while for us to be able to, sort of, pick up speed. There were, unfortunately, any number of voluntary organisations shutting down around us. So, I think it was quite hard to get started in those circumstances. It was a very, very difficult time in the voluntary sector.

Moderator: You mentioned the MP that you worked for straight out of university, was she an inspiration to you? What sort of influence did she have, and apart from your own passion and interest, was there anybody or any event that influenced your decision to, well, to work for women's rights?

Ros Bragg: The MP I worked for, Clover Moore, is a force of nature. She's in her seventies, and Lord Mayor of London, and a truly terrifying woman when she gets her mind to do something. It was fabulous watching her in action. She's quite exhausting to work for, of course, I think I've never worked so hard in my life. She is inspiring, in the sense that she was confronting the boys clubs of the major parties, so as an independent operating in a space that the political parties felt they owned, which were deeply sexist, deeply misogynistic spaces. So, to see a woman who's able to create change and gain quite interesting roles in that space, I think, was quite impressive. I think there are a lot of women I worked with at that time who I found inspiring, and in a way, it's the women who work day to day in low-profile roles, managing services locally, who genuinely get change done. Those are the ones I think that stay with me most strongly from my early years. So, working in parliament dealing with voluntary organisations, you'd have these very unprepossessing women, and some men, wandering in, to talk about the issues that concerned their constituency of disadvantaged, low-income people. You just think they're doing astoundingly impressive work. Really brilliant work. Smart women, who could work anywhere, who've chosen to work in jobs where they're going to be able to make a change for women who are really struggling, and that, I think, was what prompted me to pursue the work in the voluntary organisation. I mean, intellectually, very interesting work. I mean, this is the sort of policy work I find myself most interested in, but I think these are the places where I think you can genuinely effect change, and so watching women do that was really inspiring.

Moderator: So, being a change maker was part of your rationale in decision making?

Ros Bragg: Definitely. I think there's an incredible arrogance as a young woman, that you can go out there and change the world. Ground down by reality in the years since, but certainly, that's what prompted me to get involved in the voluntary sector, and to, yes, contribute. Not just in direct service delivery, but through the policy and campaigning work that voluntary organisations do.

Moderator: (TC 00.10.00) In the UK setting and the women's movement, one of the first examples of Women's Collective Action was the setting up of this refuge in the early 1970s. Did that influence you at all in your decision making?

Ros Bragg: I think I just took that as an obvious and sensible step to take. To meet the needs of women, you would have the services which are set up by and for women. At the time, I thought this is just how things should be. I don't think I really understood just how much work had been involved in getting to the point where you have women's refuges in place, and to maintain them in the face of some of the extraordinary attacks, which I now know they experienced. So, for me, at the time, this seemed to be just how things should be, and I suspect I brought a lot of that to my involvement with the women's sector. A sense of frustration that the obvious responses to women's circumstances seem to be so politically difficult to achieve.

Moderator: Can we now move onto leadership? Which is really important for women's emancipation and change. If you could tell us a little bit about who inspired you and

who inspires you now, how women's leadership might be different from men's, and your own approach to leadership.

Ros Bragg: Well, I think, ethical leadership in the voluntary sector is about organisations being focused on the needs of their clients, the needs of their communities, and having a really good well-rounded understanding of what that means. I also think it means being able to look inward at your staff and treating staff in a very respectful way, and to the greatest extent possible, taking a very collaborative and participatory approach with the people who work for your organisation, whether they're paid roles or voluntary roles. That's not a leadership style which is exclusive to women, but I think I see it more commonly amongst women leaders. So, for me, that's the model that I would like to use. To do that well, you do have to understand women's lives, because I think we're surrounded by institutions which frame the world through the male model. Whether it's the workplace, the welfare system, even the healthcare system, there's an incredible focus on the male framework, and particularly in the workplace. If you're a manager, and you have staff with family responsibilities, genuinely finding ways to be able to support women, to remain in the workforce while having children and caring for children, dealing with sick relatives, and so on.

I think that's one of the big challenges, and I think you can do that in a way which is still effective and efficient service delivery, it just requires a little bit more care and attention. I do think that's something that is possible to do in organisations, where there's a real understanding that we're operating in a, well, in a patriarchy, really, and that influences, pretty much, all aspects of the way in which we work and live. You asked who I think is inspiring, and I was thinking about that. I think it's some of the chairs we've had for Maternity Action in recent years, who I've been thinking about as people who've inspired me. Our first chair at Maternity Action, a woman called Moyra Rushby, was a nurse by training. Northern woman, no-nonsense woman, who had a background in international development, and working with migrants, and refugees, and asylum seekers in the UK. I think had a really good, grounded understanding about working with pregnant women. I think, so often you see in the media, this representation of pregnancy as something which is just joyous, when it's not necessarily joyous. It can be an unmitigated disaster of a pregnancy at the wrong time, with the wrong person, in the wrong circumstances. I think I really enjoyed working with Moyra, because, for her, this very grounded sense of what pregnancy means in people's lives really helped us in shaping the organisation. To really focus on some of the basic needs for women.

So, income, employment, benefits for the migrant and asylum-seeking women, access to healthcare. We had another chair, Judy Cooke, who is a retired GP, and had worked in refugee health, and had a lifelong passion for working on women's health issues. Again, I think, a really lovely values base, that the hostile environment policies, which were coming in at the time, she became our chair. I think we were really clear that we just weren't going to go down that pathway, that we had both major parties seeking to out-do each other in disadvantaging migrant woman and refugee women and asylum-seeking women on the grounds that we couldn't encourage them to come to this country. And all sorts of completely groundless claims about the floods of women who are coming to the UK to have their babies here. And I think Judy's very strong focus on human rights, and particularly healthcare in human rights, I found quite inspiring. And more recently, our current chair is Heather

Wakefield who recently retired from being head of local government at Unison, and she's had a lifetime of working in the labour movement. And I really enjoy working with Heather because she's got very strong value base, and I think has done some really nice work in trying to connect up our work on hostile environment, refugees, asylum seekers, migrant women, with the work we do to improve the lives of women in the workplace. So, quite different sets of issues but I think trying to, sort of, draw out that commonality and I think Heather's done some really nice work around that and I really like that way of thinking so that you can actually emphasise the values which underpin both strands of work, both the mainstream work on employment benefits and the work which is considered a little less mainstream with refugees, asylum seekers and migrant women.

Moderator: You mentioned ethical leadership. Can you give me an example of how you work in action?

Ros Bragg: Okay. I think the most visible way that Maternity Action embodies what I see as ethical leadership is in our employment. We have one full time person and the rest are part time. There's 21 staff in total. I'm part time. And we're very flexible about work. Working from home, working in the office, changing your days as you need to around caring responsibilities. And that's hard work. I mean, I don't want to suggest that everything is smooth sailing on that, that's actually hard work to be able to make sure that you're doing a good job of managing your organisation while you're dealing with people who may change their hours or may need to take a bit of time off because some difficult issues come up. But that's absolutely central to the work that we do, and I think we've been able to retain some excellent people, really skilled and capable women who haven't been able to stay in employment in other jobs because there wasn't that flexibility in place. So, it's certainly worked for us in terms of getting us some very, very good staff but it's not without cost, and I think it's very clear that that's part of our value base, to be able to operate an organisation on that basis.

Moderator: Thank you. So, what would you say makes successful leadership and thought for women?

Ros Bragg: That's a very difficult question. I think when I was younger there weren't very many examples of women in leadership roles, so I've watched attitudes shift from where I think a very maternal approach was seen as how women should act, how women should be leaders, through to one which I think is more accepting of different styles of leadership. So, for me I think this ethical leadership is the thing that I'm most interested in and that doesn't have to be limited to women, you certainly have men who take that approach. But I think it's one which really reflects the complexity of women's lives in balancing work and obligations outside work.

Moderator: Okay. You touched on the issues that were dear to your heart in the earlier section. How have these changed as your career (TC 00.20.00) has developed and what is dear to your heart at this moment, and how do you think, as a leader, you have influenced change and improved women's lot?

Ros Bragg: Well I think I've worked in a number of different policy areas over time, so housing for example and healthcare and so on. I think the work I'm doing at the moment at Maternity Action brings together pretty much all of my interests because it looks at the workplace, it looks at the welfare system and it looks at the hostile environment policies, which are very much about access to basic public services. So, I do feel that this is a job which I can feel quite passionate about. And I think with pregnancy, there is isn't male comparator. You're dealing with something which is only something which women experience. You have to be female to have a baby and that, I think, is almost in a patriarchy I think that necessitates some real challenges in trying to achieve change because I think there's this very narrow sense of equality which permeates a lot of the debates and if women get leave then men should get leave, for example, is one of the arguments which I think is completely misguided. You're talking about something that only happens to women's bodies, recovering from the birth as a female is quite different to dealing with new parenthood as male. I do feel these are still my passions.

The growth in the hostile environment has created completely new barriers to accessing basic services for women and indeed for anyone who's got insecure immigration status and I think I've been quite intrigued to watch that unfold with support from all across the political spectrum, unfortunately. There was quite a very clear bipartisan approach to developing hostile environment for a while there. And I do find myself getting quite exercised about the way in which that plays out in practice. I mean, some of the women we work with are pregnant as a result of survival sex so they're not allowed to work, not allowed to access mainstream benefits. They're living with a man in order to put a roof over their head. When they become pregnant, he's nowhere to be seen and so they're left with bills of £7,000 or more for maternity care and really no way to support themselves, and there's a thousand things wrong with that set up but I think it leaves women in particularly vulnerable situations because they've got the children as well as everything else, and pregnancy itself is a time when women are extraordinarily vulnerable.

Moderator: So, what would say you have been instrumental in changing or Maternity Action?

Ros Bragg: Yes, I think it's useful to talk about the organisation here rather than just me. There's been a few things where Maternity Action I think has managed to achieve change. One of our areas of work is maternity discrimination in the workplace and when we first started up we were raising concerns with the minister about the increasing rates of maternity discrimination following the crash. We kept hearing from women that they were being made redundant in processes which were manifestly unfair or they were being just dismissed with no good reason. And women were really in difficult positions, very hard to challenge that and it costs a lot of money to get good legal advice, there wasn't much to be had at that point in time. And we raised this with the minister and the comment was 'Well there's no evidence that this has increased so really we won't take any action'. So, I think what we did do is that we brought a number of groups together to put pressure on the government to take action, and what came out of that was the Equality and Human Rights Commission enquiry into pregnancy and maternity discrimination, well it was a research project rather than an enquiry, but this did a substantial piece of research, spoke to 3000 women and 3000 employers in, you

know, a carefully selected sample to identify what's actually going on in the workplace and it found that maternity discrimination had massively increased over the previous decade.

80% jump in the number of women who lost their jobs each year. And it also found that three quarters of all pregnant women experience some form of negative treatment which was probably unlawful discrimination. So, the work we did got that research out there and that's an incredibly important research in having a really credible evidence base to say that there's a problem. We have yet to turn that into changes in the law. There's been literally no change in law policy or guidance of any substance since that time, but I think having that research there has put this issue on the agenda. So, it is actually part of the current election debate, for instance, is how best to support women in the work place. That's one thing we've done. At the moment we're working on charging for NHS maternity care, and for a long time they were the only organisation talking about this issue. We were quite concerned that vulnerable migrant women were facing debts of £7,000 or more for basic maternity care and being too terrified to attend for their maternity appointments as a result. So, over the past, I suppose, ten years we have been looking at this question. We've done three pieces of research, high quality research. We have had a retired sociology academic working for us who produced really, really excellent quality research on the impact of charging on pregnant women, and also on the midwives providing the care and really documenting the harm that was flowing from that.

So, women missing appointments, not attending for care at all, avoiding what they saw as the expensive scans and blood tests. Basically, they were behaving in such a way as to put themselves and their baby at risk, and they were doing so out of fear of charges that they knew they couldn't pay, and also knowing that the consequence of that could be that they couldn't regularise their status because the Home Office takes these debts into account when determining immigration applications. So, having done quite a lot of research in this area and seeing no real change, we did last year have a breakthrough and we've now got I think all of the major health professional bodies working in this area calling for suspension of maternity charging. So, the Royal College of Midwives, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and indeed I think the academy of health colleges has called for suspension of charging, and we laid the ground work for that over the preceding years with the research we have done. And we're hopeful that that will help push the government to change. But rather than waiting for that change to take place we're also running a judicial review of maternity charging at the moment which has been a formidable piece of work.

But we have support from a very good legal team to run a judicial review of various aspects of charging which if it's successful will require the government not only to do a proper enquiry into charging, but will leave some very vulnerable groups exempt from charging, whereas at the moment they do face charges. So, women who are in local authority support, for example, have already passed a destitution test and a human rights test so it would mean that they wouldn't be charged for their maternity care. And women who are survivors of violence against women would also not be charged. And, of course, we're seeking exemption for maternity care in its entirety but I think even getting part of our judicial review through I think would substantially review the lives of the women. So, that's, of course, in progress. We haven't seen a result from that but I think simply just running that case will actually shift practice within government.

Moderator: You're doing some amazing work.

Ros Bragg: Thank you.

Moderator: How do you think your organisation and the women's sector as a whole has influenced and changed women's structural position in the UK?

Ros Bragg: That's a very hard question to answer. There's so many factors at work. I do think without the women's sector things could have got significantly worse than they are now. I think there's a whole lot of pressures to wind back employment rights, to make cuts to the welfare state, to limit access to public services and I think it's been the women's organisations that have been out there demanding that essential protections are kept. And I think fear of being seen to be negatively impacting on the circumstance of women has slowed down some of the nasty policies (TC 00.30.00) of government in recent years. So, I think it's been very helpful in that sense. That while we're dealing with austerity and we're dealing with hostile environment policies, all of which are completely antagonistic to women, I think we've managed to hold the line reasonable effectively on a few things. It's not a time when many people can make progress, I think we're dealing with a very, very difficult economic circumstance and also quite a very conservative political regime, so I think it's hard to see progress in this time. I think simply to hold the line is very effective, a very satisfactory outcome.

Moderator: Over the longer-term period, what do you think have been the greatest achievements of women's collective action?

Ros Bragg: Well, obviously the vote, I think, was one of the first very symbolic achievements of women's collective action. And when you look at the treatment of the Suffragettes, it's very clear that that was collective action on an epic scale to be able to make that sort of change. Since then, I think you start looking at what's been achieved by the Labour Movement, what's been achieved by violence against women organisations. There are a whole range of things which have really shifted women's position. I'm particularly interested in what's happened in employment, so we have really good tools in place to challenge sex segregation in the workplace. We have some inadequate but still useful tools to support women to remain in the workforce during their childbearing years and to challenge some of the prejudice that women encounter at that time. I think we've got a patchy series of services in place for women who face domestic violence. These, to some degree, help deal with some of the deficiencies in housing and welfare system and so on, but I think the idea that you move beyond the nuclear family model to look at how to support families that aren't nuclear family models with a male breadwinner and this assumption that the income is shared within those units, I think those are quite important achievement.

I mean, particularly when you look at welfare, for a while there the welfare payments were paid directly to women, or at least in part paid to women, for the benefit of the family, but at the moment we're actually seeing some real winding-back of that, so Universal Credit is generally paid only to one person, and that can tend to be the man. So, I think there's been some really effective work done in the past on that but I think, again, we're going to have to try and regain some of those wins.

Moderator: So, you've touched on this, so what do you think still needs to be done?

Ros Bragg: Oh, I could talk about this for a long time. I think the areas of most concern to me are the way in which the workplace operates with a male model. I think we've got a long way to go before we've left that behind. This is critical for women's economic independence, that they can remain in the workplace during their childbearing years. We've done very little to secure a genuine equality in sharing of caring work in the home, which would be a lovely start, but once women are in the workforce, with significantly higher caring responsibilities than men, it's how to make sure that that doesn't disadvantage them, it allows them to stay in work and to progress in work. That's one concern and I think there's a long way to go for that. I mean, I think maternity discrimination is one of the key factors in the gender pay gap at the moment. One in nine women lose their jobs because of becoming pregnant and so that's the point at which women's income stagnates, and ironically fathers' incomes increase, over and above the income of men who don't have children. So, that's a very important area I think to do some more work so that women are genuinely able to support themselves through work. I'd like to see the welfare system reformed so that it does focus on the needs of women.

It is ridiculous at the moment just how difficult women's lives are. The pay is inadequate and it doesn't actually reflect how women's lives work. At the moment I think we've got fourteen week's wait for the maternity allowance payments, and when they come, they're not sufficient to actually cover costs during the maternity leave period, for example. But I think the other area has got to be hostile environment policies. I despair at the policies which force women into destitution. There really is no way for people to have bearable lives when they're not allowed to work, not allowed to access the benefit system, can't find a lawyer who can regularise their immigration status for them for free because there is such pressure on good-quality free immigration services, and the privately-available ones are unaffordable. So, we have the creation of an underclass on a scale which is genuinely shocking. So, I think that would be one that I'd really like to see addressed.

Moderator: You've touched on austerity, and austerity has hit the women's sector. What are your thoughts on the future of the women's sector and women's rights?

Ros Bragg: Austerity is making life extraordinarily difficult for voluntary organisations. It's very hard to get the funding to do the work that you know is needed. We do advice work. It's extraordinarily difficult to get money to be able to provide women with advice on their rights. That takes up a lot of my time, trying to sort out the money to be able to do the work that we do. And I think austerity, the result of that is over time you've just lost so many organisations. So, what that means for Maternity Action is that there's increased demand at a time when we're struggling to get the money to do what we've been doing historically. Demand just keeps increasing because the local services that might pick up on some of that work have disappeared or shrunk. I think it makes it very difficult to do the proactive work. There's a tendency to focus on a re-guard action to be able to protect rights that are currently there, and it's important work. We have to do that because it's far too easy for those to disappear if there aren't people making a fuss about threats to those rights and entitlements. But I do think it's an extraordinarily difficult time. The positive, though, I think is that we do see a lot of organisations working together much more effectively that they may have done in the past. I

think everyone's aware of how limited the resources are and how difficult it is to get something done without really effective collaborative working. So, we're finding some of the partnerships we're working in are working a lot better than they might have back when there was a few more resources around. I don't want to overstate that, it's still extraordinarily difficult, but I do think it creates an environment where that sort of collaboration is valued.

Moderator: And is that collaboration within the women's sector or collaboration within the wider voluntary sector?

Ros Bragg: Both, I think. Yes, I think for a lot of women's organisations, there's been pressure to amalgamate, and some of them have ended up being projects within other organisations rather than their own individual services. Some, of course, have maintained their own identity over time, I do think that women's organisations have a history of collaborative work, it's certainly not a new concept but I think the pressure to work together is stronger now than it has been, and I do think there's more really good, targeted work, sort of, coming out as a result of that.

Moderator: Can you give an example?

Ros Bragg: I think that the work that we've done around charging for NHS maternity care is a good example. So, we're running, as I mentioned, a judicial review of charging, and we started out just ourselves doing some work with some lawyers and then we decided to collaborate with a law centre, which had very good women in charge of that law centre. Very strong feminist values. Then as we continued the work, it became clear we needed to look for evidence from other organisations. And it's all about maternity, to be fair, this is really focused on pregnant women and new mothers. So, the Royal College of Midwives (TC 00.40.00) and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists agreed to get involved and provide witness statements. And we started spreading the net more widely, so Project 17, a group that works with people receiving support from local authorities, which are overwhelmingly female, overwhelmingly women with children, they've given us witness statements. So, we ended up with, I think, eleven witness statements in total, which are quite challenging things to put together, quite time-consuming, and these groups, I think, have been actively backing the judicial review that we're working on because they can see the potential for some real benefits for women there.

And I don't want to overstate it, but that's a lot of work to put that together, and it's a lot of demand on people's time to be able to contribute those statements. We had organisations who were recruiting for key posts, who really didn't have time to do this but made the time to be able to put together their witness statements. Groups for whom this is not their primary focus, but they could see that this would be beneficial for women and they were looking for ways to be able to improve the outcomes for their clients, so they got on board. So, yes, it's an enormous piece of work I think, with a whole series of organisations making the time and energy to work on this. And of course, there are political differences. Some of the organisations we've dealt with would prefer us not to be running a judicial review which focused on maternity, they'd prefer it to be about charging for all NHS care, but I think people put that aside on the understanding that this actually would be a critically important judgement that would open the door for work that could benefit not just our client group. But

I think that's work we've been doing over the past year, and I've been just delighted at the number of people prepared to make time to support work of this kind.

Moderator: And what are your thoughts on the future for women's rights?

Ros Bragg: It's a difficult time, it really is a difficult time. I don't really know what's ahead, I think the way you argue about women's rights is shifting and changing, and the challenges to the campaigning work we've done is also shifting and changing. I find that good evidence is sometimes thin on the ground, and very good evidence is sometimes dismissed because it's at odds with some very poor evidence that someone's randomly pulled off a very poorly-constructed survey. So, I'm finding it quite a difficult time to be able to make change. Quite politically-conservative, quite focussed on Brexit, and some really quite nasty racist thinking that's underway that's created, sort of, new challenges to be able to get basic messages across. So, I don't have a clear vision about what comes ahead, but I am seeing new speed humps in any of the work we do.

Moderator: And what about the women's sector? Do you see a future for it?

Ros Bragg: The women's sector is desperately needed. There's no question in my mind that we do need organisations which are by and for women, that understand women's lives and experiences, and can provide the services and campaign for the changes needed to overcome the patriarchy, the male model that permeates just about everything that women deal with on a day-to-day basis. So, they're critically needed, I think the challenge is to be able to sustain ourselves.

Moderator: How do you think that can be achieved, the sustainability?

Ros Bragg: Well, I don't know. I mean, I'm going back to the office now to write funding bids, that takes up a lot of my time. So, I have no straightforward answers for that. I think being able to secure the resources to allow us to do the work we do is extraordinarily difficult, and I don't know how that's going to change.

Moderator: To end on a, kind of, more hopeful note, what are your hopes for the future for women?

Ros Bragg: I hope we can make the shift from the male model. I hope we can get an understanding of caring work as something which men and women both do, and which can and should be combined with work, so that no one is excluded from economic security. I'd like to see a real value placed on caring work, looking after children, looking after young babies, looking after older people. I'd like to see that become just part of the way we do things. And I'd like to see an end to the hostile environment policies, I think those are the most inhuman approaches to women I've seen in a very long time. So, I think to come back to a more basic understanding of human rights as genuinely human rights, rather than just the rights of those who've got secure immigration status in the UK.

Moderator: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Ros Bragg: No, I don't think so.

Moderator: Thank you very much, Rosalind.