



Working to Improve Safety and Self Esteem since 1994

November 2023

Issue 1

Wise Women Want Change

Welcome to our first newsletter

We are delighted to publish our first newsletter! This will be a quarterly newsletter and will include;

- News on Wise Women’s services.
- Space for information on other violence against women services.
- Contributions from women from a variety of backgrounds.

We want the newsletter to be a space for women’s voices, so if you have anything you want us to include please email us at info@wisewomen.org.uk and send us your ideas.

This first newsletter is also our annual report for 2022 / 23. At the end of this period Frances Monaghan, the Manager, retired after almost 30 years of dedication.

This means Wise Women is going through a period of change. In the newsletter we introduce the new, and not so new, staff .

Finally Wise Women is striving to get women’s voices heard. Our website has been updated to be more interactive and we welcome any ideas and contributions.

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Special points of interest

- Wise Women Staff has changed. Get to know us better.
- Bea Campbell MBE has kindly provided an article on her book Secrets and Silence. Thanks Bea!
- Our Website has been updated. Log on and tell us what you think.



Meet the staff

We have lost staff and gained staff this year. All the staff are excited about the future and look forward to meeting as many women over the next 12 months.

The staff will continue to provide Personal Safety and Confidence Building workshops and Courses and to support Glasgow Women's Voluntary Sector Network. We will continue to develop the Safer Steps project and working with our planning partners to ensure women's safety is considered during the development of Glasgow and beyond.

Dawn Fyfe—Chief Executive Officer

Dawn has taken over from Frances and has the responsibility for running the organization. Dawn is staying commitment to the original aims and approach of Wise Women and will be developing new opportunities to engage with women.

“Wise Women is such an exciting organisation to work for. Our aim to is raise women's voices across Glasgow and beyond.”



Kara Evans—Strategic Development Worker

Kara will be working to ensure that women's lived experience is not only heard in strategic groups, but also that women have opportunities to be involved in the actual decision making.

“It is so important that strategic groups not only consider whose lived experience is relevant, but that women actually influence the decision making process.”



Steph Morris—Women's Training Worker

Steph is new to the team and her remit includes supporting Glasgow Women's Voluntary Sector Network and providing volunteering opportunities within Wise Women.

“I've felt blessed to take my place amongst such a lovely team. I'm looking forward to facilitating more courses, supporting the development of the GWVSN and working with women across Glasgow.”



Roselyn Smith —Information and Finance Worker

Roselyn is responsible for maintaining all admin systems, & publicity material, organising personal safety and confidence courses. Roselyn provides telephone support for women participating in our courses. She also deals with all our finances.

“Its great being able to support women to access our courses etc, and to let them know about other services that can help. I also enjoy contributing to our staff well being approach.”



Deborah Pollacchi—Sessional Worker

Deborah is our Sessional Worker with a focus on supporting Glasgow Women’s Voluntary Sector Network. Deborah provides lots of great practical support to the team and is now trained to deliver courses.

“ I love my job. I get to work with the best women and love seeing how the work we do, helps others. “



A word from staff.

Each newsletter will include an input from one of our members of staff. For this first edition it is from Dawn.

“2023 has been a year of huge change for Wise Women. Our wonderful Manager, Frances Monaghan, retired at the end of March and since then we have been finding our feet. New staff have come in, increasing our capacity and we now have two volunteers helping with our work. It is such an exciting time for Wise Women, but it has taken time to adjust.

We are now getting into the swing of things. We have been delivering courses to women in different organisations, including Simon Community Scotland, Bellouston Academy and in partnership with Women Matter. We are also continuing to deliver workshops. Our diary for 2024 is already starting to fill and we are looking forward to the new year!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the women for their patience and commitment. We realise that change can be unnerving, but we want to reassure everyone that we are committed to building on the Wise Women you know and taking forward your suggestions from previous stakeholder meetings.

So onwards and upwards for all us Wise Women. We look forward to seeing you all in the coming year!”

Secrets and Silence; Uncovering the Legacy of the Cleveland Child Sexual Abuse Case—Beatrix Campbell

There are two moments during the writing of *Secrets and Silence* that are branded on my brain. But before I share those memories let me explain: this book began life as a review of the Cleveland child sexual abuse controversy in the north of England in 1987. The eighties was a decade of discovery – or rather re-discovery – of child sexual abuse. It was a golden era of enlightenment in a hostile environment: the Thatcher government was no friend of children in adversity.

Amazingly, the government in 1986 *for the first time* specified sexual abuse as a category of concern for all the statutory services. Professionals everywhere were mandated to act on suspicions of abuse. Referrals everywhere soared.


And - again for the first time – professionals were alerted by pioneering paediatricians to dramatic physical signs of chronic anal penetration of young children. The signs had been identified more than a century earlier by Europe's revolutionary forensic scientist, Ambroise Tardieu.

But scepticism met his discovery and the signs of sodomy came to be seen as a sign of homosexuality, not of heterosexuality or masculinity generally. That is, until paediatricians in Leeds published their research in 1986.

In 1987 when this evidence was recognised in 121 children referred to paediatricians in Middlesbrough, Drs Marietta Higgs and Geoff Wyatt, there was an instant crisis: the police rejected the evidence, publicly rebuked Marietta Higgs, the local politician protested, services were overwhelmed.

The medical evidence challenged everything we thought we knew about sex, abuse, who does it, and what is done to children. In Cleveland, like everywhere, a juggernaut of referrals increased by hundreds of per cent. But in Cleveland, the police had already withdrawn from joint working with other professionals and now they rejected the medical evidence. Marietta Higgs was dubbed the 'most hated woman in England'.

“An entire generation of enlightened professionals was squandered. “



In the summer of 1987 the government launched an inquiry – not into the national situation, but Cleveland’s local problem.

The Cleveland Inquiry report published in 1988 did not, in fact, challenge the medical signs. What it did *not* do, however, was ask or answer the question: were the children abused?

And so, inevitably, it was inferred that the children had *not* been abused. Professionals were warned thereafter to bring caution and scepticism to child protection. Three decades later, a child sexual abuse hurricane compelled Prime Minister Theresa May to commission an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, under pressure from robust survivor movements, often mobilised by a generation who had been children in the Cleveland decade.

This, then, was the context for that first memory: a message appeared on my computer screen from a woman describing herself as ‘a Cleveland child.’ I have never forgotten it because I never expected it to happen: very few the 121 children had ever spoken in public.

This woman was on a mission to make sense of her own story – to interpret her own experience amidst the negative national narrative.

She is the first to share her story before and after reading her records, and the only one to express gratitude to the maligned Dr Higgs,

‘People made her out to be bad, bad, bad, but to me she was my saviour,’ said the woman who had been a ‘Cleveland child’. She was ten years old at the time.

All too soon, the girl had lost her saviour to the inquiry announced by the government in July 1987. Marietta Higgs was no longer available. Her extraordinary and eloquent story begins and ends my book *Secrets and Silence*.

The second memory is of the National Archives at Kew, reading a newly-released Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Cleveland file. To my surprise it was a revelation.

A short letter dated July 1988 - almost exactly as year after the government had commissioned the Inquiry - disclosed that that the Cleveland paediatricians had been correct in ‘*at least 80 per cent*’ of the 121 cases.

This challenged everything that people had been led to believe. But the Treasury and the Department of Health decided that this was ‘dangerous’ information because it could attract bids for extra resources. So, this crucial information was suppressed. Saving money was more important than saving children from heinous crimes.

An entire generation of enlightened professionals was squandered. Cleveland's crisis was mobilised not to educate the public about the difficulties and dilemmas thrown up by sexual abuse, but to create 'debate without knowledge,' (to borrow Sir Richard Scott's comment in his inquiry into illegal arms sales to Iraq.)

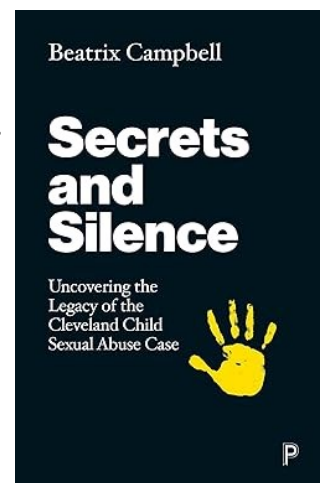
Every time child sexual abuse detonates complacency about crimes against children, cynics and sceptics invoke Cleveland and boil up a new backlash.

The cover-up has framed child abuse politics ever since. In the criminal justice system sexual crimes against children are virtually de-criminalised, and according to a Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse report, in some social services departments sexual abuse has disappeared altogether.

That is where we are at.

So, what is to be done?

Wise Women would like to thank Bea for her contribution to our newsletter. Secrets and Silence is now available from all good booksellers.



Wise Women on the Web!

Wise Women has updated and relaunched our website .

We wanted to make the website as interactive as possible. Women are now able to evaluate our services, tell us what they think we could be doing and find out more information about violence against women services.

We are also including more information on the strategic work we are involved in.

We also want to include women's voices and have a section dedicated to Voices of "Wise Women". We would love women to send us in their writing and poetry to be included.

So why not log on and have a look.

www.wisewomen.org.uk

Glasgow Rain By Steph Morris

Every day as a wean at school
I'd look up way above my head
and see my uncles' names inscribed in gold and red.

"You must live up to their example!", my teacher said.

My gran scrubbed clean that assembly hall
on hands and knees, for meagre pay
with her sons looking down, watching it all.

Outside in the playground I'm cycling laps of the school
waiting for my gran to mop the sweat from her brow,
so we can just go home.

Home, where my mum is studying hard.
Permed head in a book,
trying to offer me the life she never had.
Fag in hand she exhales, "Escha-rotomy!
Fa-sci-otomy! Endo-trachael-tube!"

The recitations of a life saver
from the front bedroom
in a council house,
on a council estate.
I'd put my roller boots on
and go out to skate.

Years later, when I finished school
my housemaster hollered after me,
"Stephanie Morris! The only thing you'll ever achieve
is opening a Bucky bottle on a park bench!"

"Fuck you!", I muttered underneath my breath
and yet, just like my own mother
by 18 I was pregnant.
Yep, a dreaded teenage mum.
Benefit scrounging scum.

I went from cider drinking goth
to nursing a child with whooping cough almost over-
night.
And the wheels of his pram would go round and round
as I walked him all over town,
describing street life and singing songs.

My gran had 9 weans,
and she howked for tatties, grafted in factories
and cleaned schools,
all to put a bit more than bread on the table.

At the hospital
my mum worked every shift that she was able,
and at night I'd fight to stay awake,
to hear that familiar taxi engine thrum
that brought her home.

So can you tell me why?
Why it is I feel a slight sense of shame
when pulling pints and serving tables,
working in call centres, doing everything I'm able?

Why do I recall my uncles' names
and feel them looking down?



Keep in touch

**Wise Women, Wellpark Centre, 120
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Tel: 0141 370 0739.**

**Email: info@wisewomen.org.uk
Web: www.wisewomen.org.uk**

Keep in touch on Social Media

Twitter: @WiseWomenTweet
Facebook: @Wise.Women.Glasgow
Instagram: @wisewomenglasgow

**Contact us to join our mailing list and
receive information direct to your
inbox or mail box!**

A word of thanks

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our wonderful funders, including;

- Glasgow City Council
- Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership
- National Lottery
- Robertson Trust
- Glasgow HSCP

A special thanks goes to the young women of John Paul Academy who were successful in securing us funding through the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative Scotland

Our Vision

“Wise Women is a feminist organisation that continues to fight the oppression all women and girls experience in everyday life. We challenge society’s attitudes towards women by encouraging and supporting women to express themselves, recognise common experiences and take action for change.”