

Podcast - Empowering Communities through Human Rights-Based Public Legal Education

Glasgow Open Justice Centre and the Marie Trust

SPEAKERS

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- Nicole Marshall, GO Justice Centre Manager
- Adam McIlwaine, Marie Trust Education Manager
- Niamh Dennis, law Student, University of Glasgow
- Jorgi Kelly, law student, University of Glasgow
- Neil, workshop participant
- Lynn, workshop participant
- Eleanor, workshop participant

Cameron Wong McDermott

Welcome listeners to the first in what we hope will be a series of podcast episodes produced by the Glasgow Open Justice Centre, which is based here at the University of Glasgow's School of Law. My name is Cameron Wong McDermott. I'm a Lecturer in Social Change at the School of Law, and I'll be hosting today's episode with my colleague, Nicole Marshall. Hello, Nicole [Hello Cameron] who is the centre manager for the Glasgow Open Justice Centre. So if you are tuning in, then you might already be familiar with Glasgow Open Justice Centre, or GO Justice for short. But if you're not, just as a short introduction. The mission of the Centre is really to drive social change through legal education and research, and how we do this is by raising awareness of social justice issues, by identifying and addressing unmet legal needs, while also trying to instil core values related to social justice and professional ethics amongst our students. Nicole, do you want to just say a little bit about the type of work that we do here at the Go justice?

Nicole Marshall

So right now, we have over 16 projects, some of that is clinical legal education, research, student led projects like the pro bono committee and this particular project that we'll be speaking about today is part of our public legal education mission. And we're joined by the Marie Trust, which we partnered up with two years ago. So this is the second year that this is run, and we're very excited to see where that goes in the future, but that is broadly what we'll be speaking about today.

Cameron Wong McDermott

Yeah, thanks, Nicole and really, the theme of today's episode is about empowering communities through human rights based public legal education. So what we're going to do is we're going to explore

how community legal education can really address access to justice gaps by increasing knowledge and understanding of the law and legal rights, but also focusing on developing the confidence skills and the agency people need to use the law in their daily lives. And as Nicole mentioned, we're going to shine a spotlight on one particular GO Justice project that Nicole and I have been involved with since the beginning, really, in 2024 and that is our partnership with the Marie trust charity, who are a leading charity for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Glasgow, and perhaps just as a very, very short overview, through that partnership, law students have been volunteering to design and facilitate law workshops to the charity's service users through the charity's innovative education programme. We most recently ran a series of five housing rights workshops, which covered a whole range of different issues relevant to housing rights. So, for example, accessing statutory homelessness services. So who is eligible? Who's not eligible? the duties that are owed by local authorities to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, how to appeal decisions relating to homelessness made by local authorities. And also a look at what the right to housing means in the context of international law, what the standards are and whether Scotland's housing protections meet those standards set by international law. And in keeping with the street law methodology, and street law is a distinct form of public legal education, the workshops were really interactive, and they were learner centred.

So to speak about the collaboration with the Marie trust, and to reflect on today's theme about empowerment, through community legal education, we're really, really delighted to, or Nicole and I, are really delighted to be joined by Adam McIlwaine, who is the Education Manager at the Marie trust. And we'll also be joined by three participants from the workshops which were hosted in 2025 so we have Neil, Lynn and Eleanor, and we've also got student volunteers from the project. So that's our students from the law school, Jorgi and Niamh. So to begin, we're going to have a brief conversation with Adam. So Hello Adam. [Hello Cameron]. Perhaps we'd begin by just you telling us a little bit about the Marie Trust and who, who the charity supports.

Adam McIlwaine

Well, as you said, we are primarily a homeless charity for those people who have either experienced homelessness or are at risk of homelessness, or possibly have had homelessness in the past, but are now moving forward with their life. But I think it's fair to say that we're a broader charity than that. We run intervention work for people who maybe are dealing with poverty issues, could be fuel poverty issues, absolutely as you said, housing issues, it could be benefits issues. We run counselling services as well for people again in that process of rebuilding your life. We have a hospital outreach service which looks like going and speaking to people who possibly, as they've been discharged from hospital, don't know what their rights are and don't know what services they can access. And we run an education service as well, which, again, is part of this, which sort of sounds like I'm repeating myself, part of this, this idea of rebuilding people's lives, that we run a variety of courses where people can begin to take those tiny first steps back into some form of education, education that they decide is going to help them to move forward. So we're a broad ranging charity, but we do deal an awful lot with people who are at risk of homelessness or have experienced homelessness.

Nicole Marshall

Thanks. Adam, so why did the trust want to partner with the University on a legal education programme

Adam McIlwaine

I think it was, what was really interesting for us, was that we, you know, our intervention team have been dealing with issues for many, many, many years. But it became, it's clear that people don't understand their rights, and with the way that things shift as well. It's very, very difficult for workers to keep up with the changes in the law and the changes that people may experience when they're accessing services. So the opportunity to actually work with the GO Justice project to not only inform our participants, but to begin to build and create tools that would inform our intervention staff as well. Because if we have a clearer idea of the rights and the access routes, then of course, we can not only inform our service users, if you want to, if you want to call them that, we not only inform them, but we can also empower them and give them the tools, and that's part of this process that we're involved in.

Cameron Wong McDermott

I think it's great Adam, you just mentioned there empowerment. Of course, that's the theme of today's podcast and I'd be interested in your reflections on how this work fits into the broader human rights agenda in Scotland.

Adam McIlwaine

I think for me, it was, it was interesting, because when we think about human rights, we tend not to think about human rights at home, you often think about human rights as a sort of global or an international setting, quite rightly, because you know, possibly there it's far more evident, or it's far more visible. So the notion of saying to people, look, you know, you have the same rights that other people have. You have that right to safety and security and to a home, and I think that people forget that. And yet, fundamentally, that's the core of what we're all doing at this moment, and certainly it's the core of what we're doing at the Marie Trust, you're trying to make people aware that they have these basic human rights and they have the right to dignity, and they have the right to, you know, to be able to ask for help and ask for things and expect to get that help as well. So being able to clarify that, working with the students, working with yourselves, beginning to empower people, I think for me, that it's an eye opener that I think we need to be we need to explain to people and possibly empower people more about the fact that they have these rights in Scotland.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Yeah, that's brilliant Adam. And very selfishly, you know, at the university, I teach access to justice, and in those classes, we speak about various different barriers to access to justice, including a general lack of awareness or understanding of people's rights. We talk about procedural barriers to access to justice, so things like complicated application forms for appealing decisions. We talk about a lack of access to advice and information on the law. But one of the things, and what I'm really interested in, is the glue that binds everything there, which is this idea of empowerment, having the confidence to be able to actually understand and be able to identify issues in your life that are actually legal, but then also being having the confidence to actually be able to get advice and information and to use the law in a way that you know achieves...

Adam McIlwaine

And that's, that's a really, really important word, confidence, I think for me, that's and from that confidence, you begin also to get curiosity. And you get people who are maybe thinking, well, actually,

wait a minute that, you know, I do have the right to this, because it's very, very difficult when life isn't going well, for some people to actually ask and to feel that, you know this is something of value. This, I'm worth something and that does come from confidence a lot of the time. So I think that's a really important word.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

I think what we'll do now is we will move on to the next part of our podcast where we introduce some of the workshop participants and also introduce our student volunteers.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Okay, so now we're joined at the table by three workshop participants. So we have Neil, we have Lynn, we have Eleanor, and we're also joined by two student volunteers who helped to design and facilitate the five housing rights workshops. We have Jorgi and we have Niamh so I'm just going to begin by asking the workshop participants, so what motivated you to take part in in these workshops that we hosted?

Neil

For me Cameron, it was basically, I get referred to a place called We Are With You from a doctor. And then from We Are With You, I went to Elevate. And through Elevate I get put in contact with the Marie Trust and with Adam who was speaking earlier. And from that, I basically went into college and stuff.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

So what were you studying?

Neil

It was just to basically, for me, it was socialising again, because obviously I was going through a lot of stuff in recovery, depression and stuff. As Adam said earlier on, the confidence, my confidence was shot. I was walking about, staring at my feet for a long time. But honestly, going to Elevate and back into college has improved my wellbeing, my mental health, so much. It's been great to be part of this team.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

And I suppose the workshops that the law students hosted, was there any particular reason why you decided to come to a law workshop?

Neil

Again, obviously, because of the housing situation with me, I was close to losing everything but it was slightly different for me because I had a mortgage. So there were certain rules or certain laws that were slightly different to me, and I managed to actually use some of it when I was going to meetings with citizens advice and stuff. So again, some of the classes, to me, was quite informative. It really was. It helped. Because there's one thing where you know a wee bit of what you're talking about. Because a lot of these things you're dealing with, mortgages and facts and figures, you don't really know what's happening. And it can, some of the words they use can confuse you. But honestly, some of these classes and some of the ones I attended up at college, it's just that it's learning a wee bit, just educating

yourself. Because, you see, there along with Adam, some people, they don't know they're entitled to these things. You just think, oh, that's not for me, for whatever reason.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Thanks for that. Neil. Lynn, Eleanor, do you have any other thoughts, reflection, why you decided to take part?

Eleanor

me, when I when I heard about it, I mean, I've never experienced homelessness, but I know people that have, and I thought to myself, I think I would like to go to that just to find out if there was anything different I could have done at the time to help with certain people. And when I went, it was an eye opener, because I think a lot of people, especially if they find themselves homeless, they would go, like to the housing and ask them for help. And whoever they were talking to, I think the person that found herself homeless, they would take that person's word as gospel and think there was nothing they could do about it. They would have to go where that person put them, and that was the end there. And whereas with the workshops, I found that wasn't true, but I also found I can't remember who it was that said it, but it is something that's stuck with me, that if you present yourself as homeless and you're offered a place, but it's no suitable, still take it, because you can always appeal it. If it's no suitable, you don't have to, like put up with it. You have got rights to appeal it. And I think that's very important that somebody who's in that situation really knows that, because it's no something that the housing is going to tell you that. So I found that very, very good advice, very good.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

There's something there about even though you haven't experienced homelessness, but there's something there about actually supporting other people who are in the situation. Neil, you were talking about confidence building for yourself, coming into college, learning about your rights in the context of the law workshops, it's all really interesting. I'll bring Lynn in like, do you have anything you want to add to why you wanted to take part in these workshops?

Lynn

At the time of the workshop, I had actually been homeless for 16 months. I was getting past about from pillar to post, no two people gave me the same answer. Felt as if I was getting ignored, and I knew of other people that were coming into the system after me and getting houses, and I couldn't understand that. Coming along to the workshop, it made me realise I was important, what my rights were, and gave me the confidence to actually push myself forward again, instead of just going right, okay, no, they said that so it must be true, whereas it's like, no, it's not true. But the information, the advice you got from the students and yourself, it was down the earth, it was realistic, and you understood it. It wasn't like, too technical, which I think is very, very important, because going through the homeless system, and everybody gets classed the same, and it's no the same, because my situation, I was a private let, my landlord sold the house. I'd worked all my life. This was a total culture shock to me, and the Marie trust it was a lifeline to me, because I'd somewhere safe to go during the day, I could afford to go and get fed. Everything else I get good advice the college courses, and if there was any advice you needed, there was somebody you could approach. But more importantly, like yourselves coming in and doing the courses, it's like, that's not stuff you can, that's not just stuff that just happens.

Neil

There's a nice, comfortable atmosphere and the things that helps a lot. When you feel part of something, you're having good conversations with people that we can all relate to.

Lynn

yeah, it wasn't a case of: you, us, everything. Everybody just down to earth, informal but at the same time as well, you got the information and you also got the support that you needed.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

That's fantastic to hear. And it's something that I've heard time and time again, actually, when you were saying there about being passed around when you're going to get advice. And sometimes that advice can be, can be inconsistent between different advice providers. And I think it's lovely to hear that being part of these, being part of these workshops, you know, they were informal. That's what we tried to do, trying to keep things informal. But I suppose building that knowledge and understanding of your rights to be able to, I suppose not just kind of use the law in a way that's, you know, you can appeal certain decisions. You have a right to appeal certain decisions. But going back to what Adam said about the trust itself, it's a bit more holistic. You know, you can do that in an informal environment. Have a tea, have a coffee. I certainly had a couple teas and coffees when we were doing those workshops. Certainly more than a few biscuits as well. But I certainly enjoyed, enjoyed the workshops as well. You touched a little bit about what you might have learned during the workshops. But how do you how do you feel you might use some of this information going forward? I know we touched on that little bit in the

Neil

It's just passing on. It's like, I call it a ripple effect. The people who have helped me. It's helped me, and that's the thing with us all, we all just want to help others and try to educate, or to try and make other people aware they have get rights and make them feel since I've been part of this, I've been feeling part of the community more. I used to be a wee community spirit growing up and stuff and it seems to have fell away some places, but being part of this the last couple of years been has been amazing for me.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

again, being part of the community?

Neil

Being part of the community, just the TED dynamic, the power dynamic, empower yourself. And through that, it can just lead to other things, you know? I mean, it just comfortable, friendly atmospheres run in good faith, good people, and just work from that.

Eleanor

And they do say, obviously that knowledge is power, I mean, and it is good to and obviously, when we were doing the workshops, then we were getting the wee handouts, we were getting to take them away, so it's no as if we were going to the wee workshop, and then like yourself Cameron or another person was talking, and then we had to remember it all and then go away. I mean, I've still got this stuff. So if somebody that I know was in that situation, I could say, well, wait, I'll look this up, and I'll see if there's a

place you can go to. So little things like that. So definitely. And then another thing I was thinking about as well, about this wee workshop, I mean it's quite good that it does go into the community, especially a place like the Marie Trust who helps the homeless do their best. Because where how else would myself? Lynn Neil, other ones that came to it, how else would we get to access that? It's no as if we're going to show up at Glasgow University's door and chap the door and ask have you got any courses going? Do you know what I mean? So if you hadn't come to the Marie trust, we wouldn't have known anything about it, I think

Cameron-Wong McDermott

that's a really important point, actually, where we have, and I, I think the space that we use, which is actually in the Marie trust in their seminar room, I think, you know, actually, there's something about our law students, and we'll speak about that, law students coming in to the community to deliver those to deliver those workshops, but not to deliver it in such a way that's, you know, like a lecturer coming in and speaking to you, here's your rights. Did you know you had rights? But actually using the kind of very interactive actives some of...

Neil

It's like the old school lawyers, like the strict way. You's are coming in, you're interacting with us, so that's a good thing. So we can relate to you's as like lawyers, and people like us see lawyers in a different way. You know, I mean nothing bad in it, but yeah, coming in and talking to us has been great, educating us, even you's must have learnt stuff with it as well. Do you know?

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Well, well, I'm going to bring in the students who have a couple of questions just related to that particular theme about law students doing this type of type of work. Jorgi, Niamh?

Jorgi Kelly

Thank you, Cameron. The first question we were just going to ask is, why do you think it matters for law students to come into the community and deliver workshops like these?

Eleanor

Well, like I've just says, if it wasn't in the community, the people that really need to know the sort of a work you's do, the help you can give, we wouldn't know if you's weren't coming into the community. So I think that's very important as well.

Neil

Seems to be a lot of things, finding out stuff, and you can ask a question, because there is a thing if you don't know, you won't get. If you don't ask, you won't get offered. But if you ask for something, then you'll get, if you know a wee bit about it, more you'll get, you'll get a wee bit more help to a certain understanding.

Lynn

You get honest answers as well. And it's basic, it's straight, it's straight to the point you can understand it, but it's not, for example, the council tell you one thing because it suits them. It's like you's actually

look at us and tell no tell, but advise us what we can do, what's available to us, instead of just getting told " Och no, can't do anything just now, but your on the list"

Jorgi Kelly

Thank you very much for those answers. I'm sure Neve's feeling about us is appreciative as I am. I'm just shocked by the impact that we had, and I'm actually feeling quite emotional,

Niamh Dennis

I was just gonna say that I've been feeling quite emotional hearing all your answers. And I think my question was just more about us as students heading into practice in the next coming years and as future lawyers. What do you think that future lawyers need to understand or be able to do to work with people facing human rights challenges.

Lynn

See, as well as being professional, which I totally appreciate you've got to be, it's like, remember who it is you are talking to, and like, talk with them and don't talk at them. Because there's too many people out there that talk down to people and see when you're already feeling vulnerable... It's just the approach that you's had was welcoming, and you actually look forward to coming every week because you knew you were going to learn something else. You were all lovely. You were all dead down to Earth, and just like be professional, but be down to earth. Remember, we're all human beings,

Neil

just treating people with respect each other, as well. A lot of people look down on you or talk at you, and it might make you miss information . But when you're sitting in a room with people that you trust, you feel comfortable and you know they know what they're talking about. We know you guys are talking about, you know, we've got lived experience, and it's a good it's a good wee atmosphere.

Eleanor

I just think going forward, that would be a good idea if what like people like yourselves found it from people that were homeless, or from people that other people that were just like the background of them, find out what helped them. And like Adam was saying earlier, everything changes so quick. The law and the housing, the law and human rights, everything changes so quick. So always try and keep up to date with what's happening, what people can do to help their self, find out about all different organisations where certain people can go for help, just like a catalogue of people that can help really

Neil

When you've nearly lost it. You feel alone. You feel lost. And stuff. And then getting back in you get a bit of respect and talking, and feel that your personal development, your own self esteem, it can grow. I can always speak for myself and the guys here, it's been great, just to make people part of things, to feel part of things.

Niamh Dennis

Think, seeing like the people behind the law and like, obviously at law school, we're learning a lot of cases and different things. And then I think when you actually get to meet people, it's like, brings, like

you said, that human aspect back to it. And I think that's, yeah, it's been really nice. And I think what you said also, Lynn about having, like, a holistic approach to the law, to look into other organisations that are around the law, that can support the law is also something that's really important for people facing human rights challenges, because it's not necessarily just about the courts, but also organisations like the Marie Trust, yeah,

Neil

You're doing it from a lawyers side, but there should be more of a community reach out. So, I mean, it's great if I mean, you've also learned stuff as well and we've learned stuff, just try pass it on to others too. I mean, try educate others

Cameron-Wong McDermott

that's a really good segue, Neil, into the next question, which I had, which is actually focused on you guys as students. I'd be interested to know what motivated you guys to take part in these workshops, and also how being part of these workshops perhaps changed any understanding that you had about law and about practising law. Perhaps. Niamh, do you want to share any thoughts?

Niamh Dennis

I got involved in this project is because I had had a family member facing homelessness, and I'd seen firsthand the impact that having education and advocacy, like advocating for yourself, has on your prospects of gaining suitable accommodation or safe housing. So I'd seen, yeah, basically the power of that first hand, and no one had to be involved in something that was doing this as a project and into a local community. And I also think more broadly, I was just interested in public legal education and the role that has and I think this was a great opportunity to get that experience, because it was something because it was something I'd heard a lot about but didn't know what that would actually look like in practice. So I thought this was like a great experience to understand how I could, like implement that into my career.

Jorgi Kelly

well, at the moment in my professional life, I actually deal with quite a bit of these kind of issues. However, unfortunately, the position that I'm in, I have no way to help directly. So when this opportunity came up, I found a chance to finally get involved with the community and get out there to start empowering the community in a way that, I didn't find that this project was intimidating. It was about learning together. It wasn't about us telling you that leads me into my next reason was that I did want to learn from the community. I came to the University of Glasgow through a REACH program due to my area that I came from, and I definitely do think that social justice work makes a big impact in communities. And I wanted to kind of break down that barrier and make legal knowledge more accessible to everybody, because law should be a tool. It shouldn't be gate kept. It should be for everyone, because that affects everyone. At the end of the day,

Neil

some people don't think the law applies to them, feeling the way they feel and stuff like,

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Do you guys have any questions you want to ask students? This might be a good opportunity to turn the tables all the way.

Neil

I wanted to ask what made you guys want to start this programme. Is it the Marie Trust or you's that put it together. Who was it that started it?

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Well, it's a very good question. So we were actually approached by the Marie trust, and we had a conversation, a very early conversation, I think some point in 2024 or 2023 actually, I think it was when I first joined the law school, and it was one of the first meetings that I actually had. And it was Adam and Frances, the charity CEO, who explained about the education programme, and the types of work that the education program does, some of the college courses. And I was really interested, because I have some background in doing kind of public legal education, community legal education work. But sometimes it's just about thinking about the structure, how it can actually work. But it was almost like a ready-made example of the Marie trust, having the centre, having the space, having the programme itself. So it was really just a case of us identifying a particular topic, working with Adam, with Frances, understanding what the gaps were and in the curriculum or in the program, and corralling some interested students to be involved. And I think, from my perspective, it's been really a real joy to supervise the students to do this work, because at the university, we don't actually teach Housing Law directly. We teach things like public law, administrative law, but we don't touch on specifically housing law. So there was a bit of a learning curve for, well, not just for the students, for me too. I've never practised in Housing Law. It was a little bit of a learning curve there for all of us. But I think what was really important and about this project is not really about the subject, about what it's about. It's actually the structure how you actually deliver human rights training and develop that understanding. And it's, for me, it's thinking about the different ways that we do that that isn't just coming in and doing a slideshow and presenting here are your rights, but actually thinking about different ways that you can do that. So obviously, during the workshop, we did a letter writing exercise, so kind of mock appeal to the Council for a housing decision. We had a final session reflecting on the right to housing. What it actually means is Scotland abiding by its international obligations. So just trying to think, you know, a little bit more creatively, almost, about how we can kind of deliver some of this, some of this training, and we've got some interesting ideas for the future that aren't just, you know, like traditional classroom based activities, but thinking about other things, like photography, thinking about writing poetry that can actually, you can use those ways to talk about some of those methods, to talk about Human Rights in a way that's, you know, more fun and creative. And I know the Marie trust does some of that work, so we'll be interested.

Neil

We actually all took part in anonymous drama.

Eleanor

Anonymous drama, well, to be quite honest, when it started, I just thought, anonymous drama? What is that? But when I went Elaine, who took it, she was, she was just all so funny, so funny. And even though you were just meeting her for the first time, you actually thought you'd knew her for years, but it

was so, so good. And we all sort of like wrote all different wee parts, and then it all came together, and then we performed it in front of a couple of family members and strangers. It was just amazing, absolutely amazing. It really was.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

think that's yeah, and I think that's something that I've been giving a lot of thought to, that in the centre we've given a lot of thought to is like, how do you thinking about how we teach law as well. So when we teach law, we teach in a very traditional way, a very doctrinal way, we would say, so here is, here is the law, here's the cases, here's the legislation, the job of the lawyers is to interpret those. I mean, that is a that's a core skill, of course, for lawyers. But when we think about how we teach the law, you know, there are people who, you know, teach law through performing the law, you know, through theatre, through creative writing as well, through photography, these are all great methods to start talking about the law and to interrogate and critique the law as well. So it's you know, you guys can look forward to some of that, hopefully in the next few years. Any other questions for our students?

Eleanor

So if you go, if what are the plans, like, say, are you going to continue working with the Marie trust and, like you've just said, photography, the creative writing, is that the sort of a road that you're going to take the workshops down next?

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Well, that's, that's what we are, we're hoping to do. So we're thinking about the future, not just with the Marie trust, but we're also thinking about how we can adapt some of the housing rights workshops for other organisations. So we're planning over the summer to do housing rights workshops with an organization called the Scottish Refugee Council, so working with their voices, ambassadors, or people who have lived experience of the asylum system to do some of the work that we did with the with you guys in the workshops just a few months ago, but I think in terms of next year, and thinking about what workshops we might want to deliver. I'm really interested in thinking about how we can, you know, use sort of creative methods, like photography, like creative writing, like theatre acting, role play, to use that to talk about to talk about law, talk about rights, talking about challenging decisions as well, but doing that through a way that's creative, fun, hopefully, and going back to going back to the theme thinking about how that builds people's confidence and builds a community of learning that sometimes just standing up and talking from a PowerPoint

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Okay, so that sort of, we're drawing to a close now in, in today's in this episode, and I think that's been, I mean, for me personally, and I think for Nicole, you know, being part of this project since, well, since, since it began in 2024 it's been so it's been such an honour to have everybody around the table to talk about our experiences of being part of these workshops and to design and deliver the workshops. And it's been great to have everybody around the table to talk about that. But I'm just thinking about the theme of today's podcast, which is all about community legal education. So building a kind of community, learning community, talk about rights, talk about the law, and using the law and thinking about empowerment as well, and how doing these workshops has empowered you, perhaps. And so I'll

just open the floor just for one final reflection on the on the theme of the workshop. So I'm just going to go to my right so perhaps, Neil, if you want any final thoughts for the

Neil

Just keep it going. It's been great to be a part of. So, I mean, it's just don't really know what else to say. Just keep up the good work.. It's been great for me, as I say, my personal development, confidence, self esteem. When I first day I went up to college, I could always remember it sweating. I was nervous, squeaky bum time, and then for then I'm not walking about, staring at my feet. That's what I was doing for a long time, and it's just been that's been the last two and a half years, really. And great to be part of this. I was part of this when it first started last year. Great,

Eleanor

Me, personally, I am definitely a great believer in knowledge is power, and I feel that I've got a lot more knowledge about what my rights are, not just with housing, but with other stuff as well. And it's just, it's just been really good to learn it. And I just want to take this opportunity to thank you so

Lynn

it's been really worthwhile in the fact that you've got to see like your legal rights, but they were put across to you in a down to earth manner, and you understood it. You didn't feel silly. You didn't feel like back at school getting spoken to. So keep up the good work, and keep doing the workshops, because I know I've gained a lot from it, and even just one of the handouts we got with all the useful organisations and phone numbers. It's like I've not actually used them myself, but I've actually passed them over to people, and I've actually felt confident handing them over to people. And it's like I felt for once I actually know what I'm taking about!

Neil

We're empowering ourselves. We're in comfortable environments, so from that you can just you see we're all smiling and happiness. Just try to pass it on to somebody else.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Jorgi, do you have any final reflections?

Jorgi Kelly

I definitely think this experience will stay with me when I go into practice. And it's definitely shown me that advocacy should be collaborative. Everybody's got a good view, and it definitely opened my eyes to the fact that legislation and case law can say one thing, but people's lived experience is entirely different, and we really do need to be empathetic to that and kind of change our way of advocacy in relation to people's lived experience.

Niamh Dennis

Yeah, sorry. I second what Jorgi said on that, and I also think it's empowered me, personally to think a little bit more creatively about the way I can use my legal skills and my legal career, and what perhaps my career as a lawyer could look like in social justice. Because I think often we see the law as being quite a like clear cut career. You go train as a solicitor or barrister, and that's what that's what the law

is. That's what being a lawyer is. And I think this project's made me realise there's so many different ways to be a lawyer or work within the law. And I think it's yeah, just empowered me to think a little bit more about that and be confident in taking like, a different career choice.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

thanks, and perhaps, Adam?

Adam McIlwaine

I mean from a Marie Trust point of view, today has been really, really good, because you do reflection with people, but to actually sit and hear what people are feeling in an informal environment that was that's really good for us, because, you know, in this sort of climate now where funding is so difficult to get, and funding is withdrawn from organisations as well, when you sit in an environment like this and you hear the impact that a workshop has or a course has, how it empowers people, people's confidence is raised, and the ability to feel more human if you want to call it that, then you really do question the sort of the value, or what people will put value on, because this type of education, and the way we were talking before Cameron about possibly developing this into different styles and different creative aspects, this is so valuable and you know from our organisation, it has been fantastic. And the next step for us, would we love to develop them, the sort of the work we've been doing, into tools that we can use on a day to day basis, with, with, people coming into the centre, and of course, that'll open up their curiosity, and they would be the next group that would come to the workshop. So from our point of view, it's been massively successful, but it's great to just hear the thoughts of people firsthand.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Nicole, any final, final thoughts

Nicole Marshall

Yeah, so just touching on what Adam was saying there about that passion to continue and keep doing what we're doing. And I think Adam, when you approached us in 2023 it was something that I was really passionate about, and the organisation and Marie trust, and the holistic approach that you take and experiencing homelessness, homelessness myself when I was younger, having something like that would have been invaluable. So coming into this project, it's been, I suppose, a double sided coin, and seeing the harsh reality of the crisis at the minute, but also at the other side, seeing the hope that organisations like yourself is bringing and having this holistic approach. And I think for us at GO Justice, it's about how we nurture that and continue to develop and make sure that we're expanding, I suppose, and just staying as much as we possibly can within our capacity and again, just extending that even further in other areas in the community, but it's been amazing listening to the impact that it's had for yourselves and also the students and I just gave us even more passion in my bellies to keep it going.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

That's lovely. Thank you very much, Nicole, and I don't think I have anything else to add that hasn't already been said, but I think I've been in the Human Rights game for a wee while now, and one of the words that keeps coming up in the work that I do in the literature, the academic literature about human rights, is always about empowerment. And I think sometimes that can feel like quite an abstract word that just loses a bit of meaning when you can repeat it. It's about empowering people. It's about

participatory processes. And actually, I think what's been lovely about today is we're actually kind of putting some meat on the bone and actually explaining what that actually means.

Neil

Can I tell you what empowerment looks like? two and a half years ago, I walked through the doors of the Marie trust and everybody at this table has helped me to get to the place where I am now, and I start a job on Monday with the Scottish Drugs Forum, and it's been because of the help from all you guys.

Cameron-Wong McDermott

Congratulations!

Cameron-Wong McDermott

I think, just to end the podcast and just talk a little bit about the future of the project and the partnership with the Marie trust, Adams already mentioned some of the work that we want to do, which is to develop some toolkits and materials that people can go away with and use in their in their daily lives. We're also thinking about other types of creative methods that we might want to use in future workshops with the Marie trust, and we're also thinking about how we might use some of this, some of these workshops with other communities, with lived experience of the asylum system, in particular with the Scottish Refugee Council. So hoping to expand and grow, but this has been absolutely wonderful to hear about the impact that this project has had on everybody who's been involved in it. So if you would like to find out more information about the Glasgow Open Justice Centre, we have a website, and you can find out about the range of projects that we have on there. So that covers things from our law clinics to our research projects and to our extracurricular projects, like the Community Legal Education programme. And if you would like to find out more about the Marie trust and the huge range of different work that the Marie trust does, as Adam was explaining, then please do have a visit of their website. And that just leaves me to say, thank you, everybody for taking the time out of a tuesday morning to join us in this in the Glasgow universities studio, and thanks for having us. Thank you. Enjoy the rest of your day.