

INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITY CURATORS

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WYQS.CO.UK





WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

Oral history involves collecting and using personal historical stories gathered through recorded interviews. The material can then be used in museum displays, publications, web platforms and educational settings. They have important value as a way to gather lived experience and marginalised histories which can add dynamic and engaging materials to archives and museum displays.

To find out more look at these websites:

ohs.org.uk

hlf.org.uk/oral-history

PREPARATION

FINDING PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

This oral history gathering is part of the bigger WYQS project. As a volunteer you may be using your own contacts to source participants from your networks. We may also put out a request for specific participants (particularly to address gaps and to gather testimonies from marginalised communities) and we may ask people already involved in the project to contribute their own stories.

It is important that you contact one of the Community Development Workers (Ross or Rachel) before arranging an interview to give an outline of who you are interviewing and why you are interviewing them. This will ensure that Ross and Rachel can keep track of the range of participants involved in the project.

MAKING PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

It is up to you to choose the location for the interview but it is important that it is in a quiet environment so that we get a good quality recording; for this reason meeting in a public place like a café or pub, probably won't work.

If it is someone you already know you can interview them at your home or their home.

If it is someone you don't know, you could still use your own home or theirs if you feel comfortable with this. However, you may wish to meet in a more neutral environment such as one of the rooms in the West Yorkshire MESMAC offices. Speak to one of the Community Development Workers, Rachel and Ross, if you would like to do this.

You can also claim travel expenses from Rachel and Ross. Please keep your receipts or log your mileage so that you can be reimbursed. We can help cover the travel expenses for the participant and provide a taxi for disabled people if required.

Access is something to consider when you are arranging the interview to enable all participants to take part. Please contact Rachel and Ross if you need any further advice.





DISCUSSING THE PROJECT AND CONSENT WITH YOUR PARTICIPANT

Use the 'Information for Participants' document to explain and discuss issues of consent with your participant. It is important that they understand the ways the content for the interview will be used and the wider aims of the project. The document can be sent to them as an attachment to an email and a printout should be given to them at the interview or any pre-meetings.

It is also important to discuss the topics or themes that you will be covering in the interview. Make sure you also discuss practical arrangements with them (e.g. location, travel, timing) along with any objects or photos they want to bring, and anything else that might make them feel confident and supported. These conversations could take place via email, phone or in person. Social media should only be used to contact participants that you already know.

PLANNING YOUR QUESTIONS

It is important to plan questions or prompts in advance to make the most of the time you have and to remain focused. It is best to use short open questions which give the participant permission to tell their story in their own way.

INTERVIEWING TIPS

Before you start the interview, make them feel at ease:

- Offer to make them a cup of tea/coffee and have water available (for you and them), and a box of tissues
- Check that they are comfortable, is the room warm/cool enough and is there anything they need in order to participate?
- Remind them that we can delete any mistakes and remove any information they are uncomfortable with
- Make sure they have any notes/objects/photos they need
- Tell them they can raise their hand at any time to pause/stop the interview
- Use the 'Information for Participants' document and 'Agreement Form' as guides to explain how their testimony will be used

START THE INTERVIEW

Start recording - see 'How to use the recorder'

Once you have started recording, watch the timer and allow 5 seconds of time to pass before speaking

- Start with saying your name, the date and the project then ask the





participant to say their name, pronoun, date of birth, where they live and how they identify. It might be useful to have these prompts written down for the participant. If a participant objects to giving this information, then just ask them to give their first name

- Use open body language and encourage them with nods and eye contact but avoid using verbal encouragement, like saying 'mmm', as this may be heard in the recording and can be hard and time consuming to edit out
- Speak clearly and ask questions one at a time, let silences run as this is often needed by the participant to gather their thoughts
- Use supplementary and clarification questions if needed but try to keep your input to a minimum so the recording is mostly the participant speaking

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Take photographs of any objects and the participant (if they are happy with that). The 'Agreement Form' covers both spoken testimony and photographs
- Thank the participant for their time and generosity
- Tell the participant that their recording can be made available to them for checking, if requested, for up to a week after the interview
- Ask the participant to sign the 'Agreement Form' and the 'Monitoring Form' and tell them that a feedback form will be emailed to them by one of the Community Development Workers
- Follow up the interview with an email of thanks
- Listen back to the interview and complete the 'Interview Summary' form
- Contact Rachel or Ross to arrange handing in the recording device along with the 'Interview Summary' and 'Monitoring Form'
- Your recording will then be emailed to you for transcribing. Follow the 'Transcribing Guidelines' and when the transcription is complete, please email it to Rachel or Ross

CONTACTS

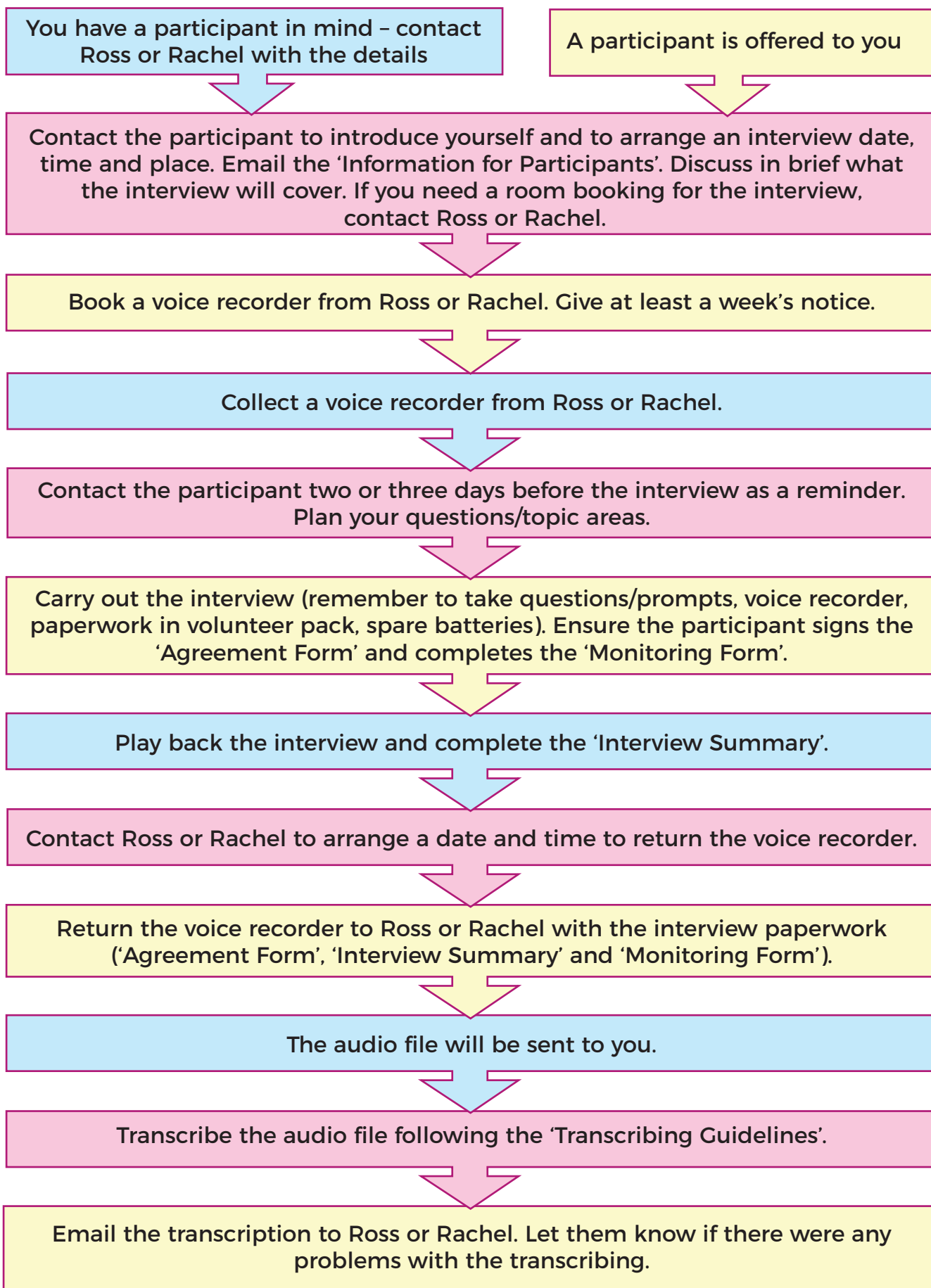
If there are any issues or concerns about interviewing, please contact one of the Community Development Workers:

Rachel: 07715 213 647 / r.larman@mesmac.co.uk

Ross: 07407 761 569 / r.horsley@mesmac.co.uk



THE INTERVIEW PROCESS





HOW TO USE THE RECORDER

To SWITCH ON:

Slide the [POWER] switch towards POWER for several seconds.
Screen will say 'ON'.

To START recording:

1. Press [●]. The REC/PLAY indicator (the circle around the [●] button) blinks red. The recorder is now in the record-standby state.
2. Press [●]. The REC/PLAY indicator will stop blinking and light red. Recording will begin.

To PAUSE while recording:

1. Press [▶/||] to pause.
2. Press [▶/||] again to resume recording.

To STOP recording:

1. Press [■]. The REC/PLAY indicator will go out.
2. The recorder will automatically give the file a name based on the date and time of the recording, e.g. 0612_150604.WAV (June 12th, 15:06:04).

To PLAY BACK a recording:

1. Use [◀◀] [▶▶] to select the file you want to play. The file name is in the top-right corner of the screen.
2. Press [▶/||] to play the file. The REC/PLAY indicator will light green.
3. Use VOL [+] [-] to adjust the volume.
4. Press [■] to stop playback. The REC/PLAY indicator will go out.

To SWITCH OFF:

Slide the [POWER] switch towards POWER for several seconds.
Screen will say 'OFF'.

- Top tip! The recorder is only recording when the red light is constant. If it's flashing or not lit, that means it's not recording.
- To view the full operating instructions online visit:
roland.com/us/support/by_product/r-07
- Please take care not to get the recorder wet. It's much more sensitive to water and steam than a mobile phone.





TRANSCRIBING GUIDELINES

A transcript is an accurate and verbatim reproduction of an oral history interview. A transcript makes the original audio material more accessible so that it can be used for different purposes, including museum displays and academic research. There is no consensus on how to transcribe but these guidelines will be used for the WYQS project to ensure there is consistency. Remember that you are trying to produce an accurate written version of someone's speech.

ETHICAL ISSUES

It is important that we accurately represent what has been said in an interview because we are collecting people's personal stories and memories. Oral history is all about the views and reflections of people and goes far beyond recording factual detail.

- Do not correct participants' words or tidy up the sentence structure.
- Do not change content even if you think, or know, that it is wrong. You can add a note in square brackets [] following any content that you believe to be incorrect.

TRANSCRIPT FORMAT

- At the top of the first page provide the following information, centre aligned and in bold:

Name of participant

Topic/theme

Interviewed by x

Date of interview

- Use Arial, 12 point font and 1.5 line spacing.
- Set up page numbers to show at the bottom of each page.
- Show the speaker using initials and a colon and leave a line space between question and answer. For example:

RL: Tell me about the protests carried out by the Gay Liberation Front.

PH: Well, we boycotted...

- Start a new paragraph if the participant moves on to a new point or a new topic.





TRANSCRIBING THE SPOKEN WORD

- Transcribe everything that you hear, including asides, repetitions and use of phrases like 'you know'. Brief and repetitive 'ums' and 'ers' can be missed out unless you feel they are significant, for example if you feel the participant is evading a question. Including all 'ums' and 'ers' can make transcripts very difficult to read.
- Feedback sounds or words from the interviewer can be missed out. For example, 'mm' or 'uh huh'.
- Reported speech should appear using single quote marks.
- Titles of publications or plays should be italicised.
- Numbers up to ten should be written out in full. Numbers after ten should be written in figures.
- If a word or phrase cannot be heard or is unclear, use one of the following:
 - [unclear]
 - [???] a long section where the recording is inaudible
- If you are unsure of a spelling, perhaps for a name or place, then spell it as it sounds and put [ph] for 'phonetic spelling' directly after the word
- If anything needs cutting out put it in square brackets with cut out in bold, for example
[Clive's daughter interrupts – cut out]
- Use punctuation to show pauses
 - a comma, for a short pause
 - three full stops... for longer pauses
 - [pause] for very long pauses
- Use square brackets to indicate any breaks in the recording, laughter, change in dialect or anything else that adds interest to the interview or helps to explain what happened. For example:
AW: Well, I thought that was it! [laughs] [telephone rings]
- Use dashes for interruptions or when the participant has changed direction. For example:
PL: I started going clubbing in the '80s – oh, what I meant to say was...

If you have any concerns when you are transcribing, please note them down and send them in with your transcript so that one of the Community Development Workers can look at them.



TRANSCRIPTION EXAMPLE

Joy Marshall

Politics, Activism and Campaigning

Interviewed by Rachel Larman

23 July 2015

[Background conversation – **cut out**]

JM: Yes, for me it was the opportunity to go to further education/higher education, to go to polytechnic, to do a degree that made a real difference in my political awareness. It gave me the opportunity to debate a number, lots of different issues, partly because I did a history degree which opened up all sorts of issues around women's role in society and in the past and in political movements.

[JM: Is that enough? **Cut out**]

I think a lot of the people who went to work at the new universities were very radical, so there would be Marxist lecturers, Maoist lecturers. People who were very overtly political, teaching and then influencing us in terms of making us think about issues in a new way.

Also, they were also involved in some of the groups that were set up; so the first women's group I went to, one of the academics who taught me, his wife was involved in that group, looking at issues to do with violence and domestic violence against women and how that fitted in with socialist politics, women's politics and looking more directly at women's role in history and the influence of women on history.

I think in terms of women's politics, I got involved in socialist politics but I didn't initially particularly want to be involved in separate women's politics and that was because I didn't really, when I was growing up, rate women that much, because I wanted to be a man and do exciting things that men did, have adventures, run the world, do things, whereas women seemed to mess around with dolls a lot. That's what I always felt. I went to university and I met women who were very influential, very dynamic, had wonderful ideas, who were really inspiring, I started to think, 'Ooh, wow', women can be not just little women, they can be and have been real influences, women who have made a real difference, unacknowledged and also where they haven't had the opportunity to, they should have the opportunity to influence events.



[RL: ... the Communist University **unclear – cut out**]

Part of that was I went to the Communist University in London which was run in the 70s and 80s every summer and a lot of women historians, sociologists would speak at a lot of those various seminars and workshops run. So from Sheila Rowbotham to Bea Campbell to, I don't know, other people I can't remember the names of, who were very inspiring and...

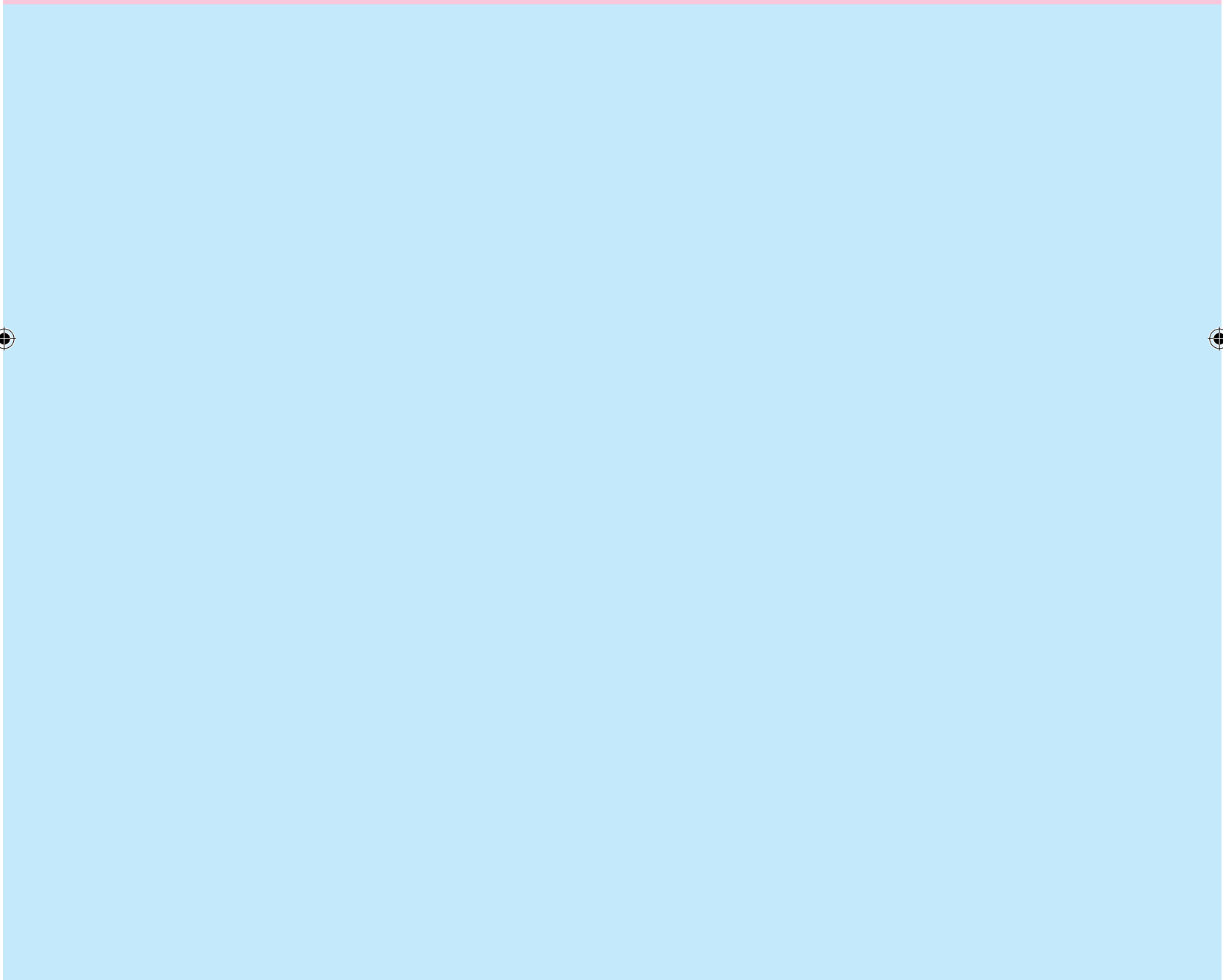
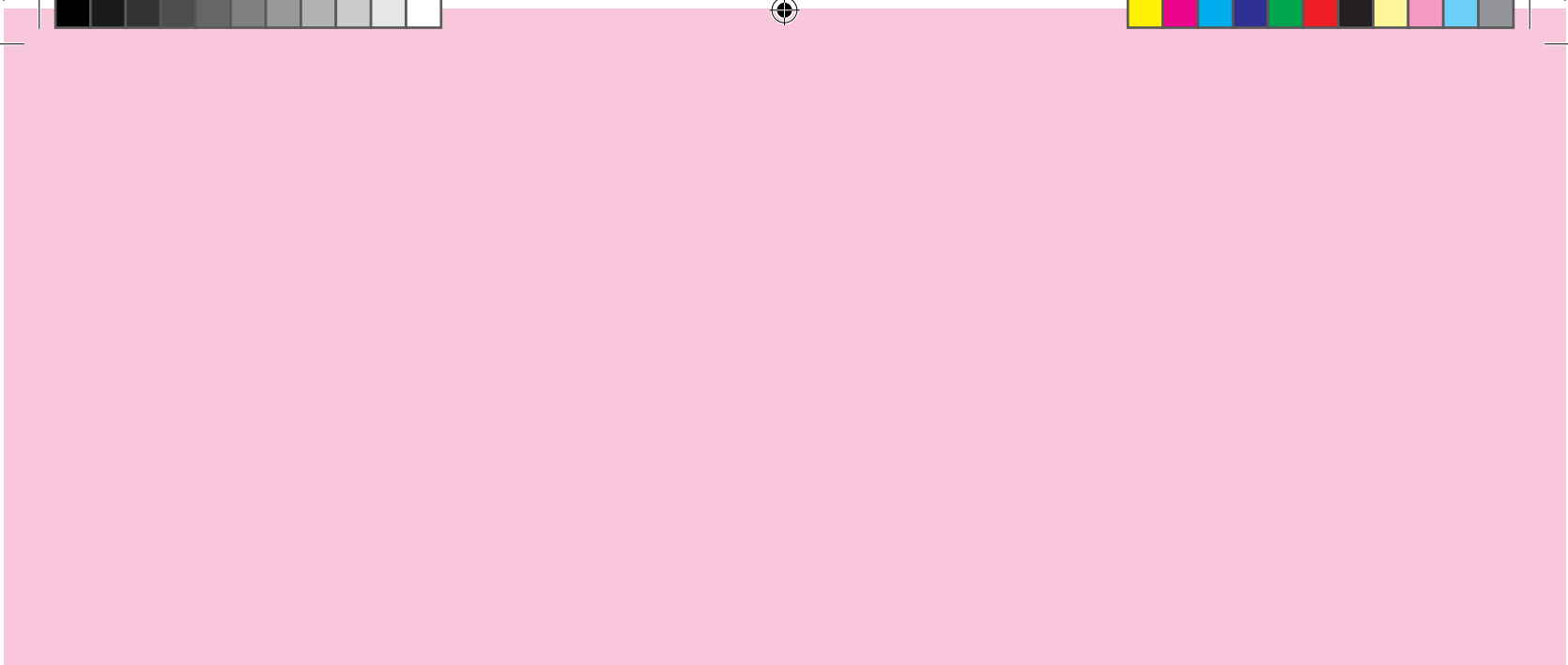
[**JM's mother in law calls out** JM: I'll have to go cut out]

I think women's groups at the time worked in lots of different ways. [Shout from JM's mother in law – **cut out**] You could have...

Yeah, I think the organisation depended on what it was, so if we were campaigning against something, then issues of raising money, doing posters, how you actually organised it and people had different views about that. Looking back it was an amazing time because there was so much opportunity to be involved ... in such a diversity of campaigns and organisations and discussions about every aspect of life, and the sort of society that we wanted. Interestingly, I feel that some of those things were less effective than I like to think they were and, you know, what changes have come as a result, particularly for young women today, and I'm much less involved in anything overtly political now. And yet I see there are things going, happening, action taking place around a wide range of things which I think are really important but I'm not actually very involved with and I think... it's very inspiring to think that people are willing to take those things on in an environment that's much more difficult... much less open in a way, even though we weren't aware of it at the time. It seemed to be OK to do all these, to be involved in things which were quite risky in lots of ways, to get involved in big demonstrations with thousands of people, with the police involved and horses and all sorts of things, whereas now I think the police have got techniques which make it much more difficult for people to actively get involved in demonstrations for example or, you know things like, Greenham Common, you know that, to just be able to go somewhere and camp out, just outside this camp and do things... I don't know whether you could get away with doing that now. You know, how, maybe people do, they take all sorts of risks around power stations... camping in the middle of town, I would never have thought of that.

[unclear at end – cut out]





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