

Sarah Hughes (00:06)
Hello.

Sarah Hughes (00:07)
I'm Sarah Hughes. I'm a writer from the North East, and I'm so happy to welcome you to the Womxn Up? Podcast. This podcast is Workie Ticket Theatre's response to the global Covid-19 pandemic, which highlights North East women's stories through a series of audio plays and real life interviews. This exciting project will create a history. Actually, let's make that a herstory to add to our heritage in the North East, so that now and in the future North East women's stories of the Pandemic will be heard through our podcast series.

Sarah Hughes (00:43)
These podcasts contain adult themes and some strong language.

Sarah Hughes (00:54)
I reckon we should kick this off by just letting people know why and how this whole project came about. So, JoJo, do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

JoJo Kirtley (01:06)
Yeah. So we were struggling to think of ways that we could create Theatre, and I was pregnant and worried about the future of Workie Ticket is the kind of bottom line of this at first and exploring different ways. And then I got in touch with you and said, I really like what you're doing, and she's going to have a little chat about. The good thing is thought and maybe do a podcast. And then also me and Lindsay were talking about this idea of Womxn up, and did we have to Womxn Up and crack on during the pandemic?

JoJo Kirtley (01:46)
And I kind of thought maybe we could make place create a podcast. That was my initial kind of thought around it.

Sarah Hughes (01:55)
It was all quite vague at the beginning, wasn't it? We were just chucking ideas around, and we kept coming back to this idea of the podcast and how we could kind of tell stories of what people were going through at the time.

JoJo Kirtley (02:08)
And I think then I started researching articles online about women during the pandemic. I literally just Googled it to see because obviously at the time I was really struggling myself. I was pregnant. I was going through a really bad time maternity wise, having a lot of things restricted for me. And I kept thinking, if I'm struggling, what is it like for globally women? What is it like for the country? And also that I was thinking about the North East. Was it like regionally for the women in the North East?

JoJo Kirtley (02:37)
And I was part of this maternity group, and lots of women were like crying online and saying, I don't know what I'm going to do and midwife wife appointments. And I kept thinking, that's a story there. And am I ready to tell that story or I felt like it was a time that every woman you spoke to had a story.

Sarah Hughes (02:55)
And in a way, that was quite a nice thing. Everyone had their own, even if it was really difficult and people were struggling, which the vast majority of people obviously were. Everyone had their own kind of tale to tell.

JoJo Kirtley (03:08)
Yeah, the homeschooling situation was a mess as well. And everybody was stressing about that. And I thought, Well, there's a story there, but people want to hear that because there was a lot of backlash about that, too. And then I came across this report that the UN were doing in April 2020. That sort of had a few findings about it. I think it was December 2020. They published their report, and it just

shocked me just how much women had lost during the pandemic, and how the inequalities of women had been exacerbated and highlighted.

JoJo Kirtley (03:47)

And that sort of then triggered off. Hang on a minute. We really need to do something about this.

Sarah Hughes (03:53)

And I think pretty quickly, although we're honed in on that podcast idea and work, your ticket wanted to make it part of a wider body of work.

JoJo Kirtley (04:05)

It actually started off by thinking a film, didn't it? Lindsey were like, Should we do a film? Because I didn't really know much about podcasts, even though I'd listened to lots during the time, because that was a conversation we had had and they were like, oh, I've been this podcast and I was listening to one about Grease 2.

Sarah Hughes (04:25)

Nothing about true crime that I don't know.

JoJo Kirtley (04:30)

It really does. I think I listen to that one, too. But, yes, there's all that going on in my head. So it start off as, oh, should we do a film? I think, what do I know about films and all that sounds mad at people who probably don't know kind of the know they think that if you're a writer, you can write a film, but that's just beyond my capabilities, if you like, well, you thought it was true. I started applying for money for film. We got a little bit of a pot of money from Comic Relief to make a film.

JoJo Kirtley (05:05)

But that is more kind of like fighting for gender justice is the theme of that.

Sarah Hughes (05:11)

Before we go on with that, were you just for anybody who isn't familiar? I mean, how dare they not be, but anybody who's not familiar with working ticket.

JoJo Kirtley (05:19)

What is your ethos and what have you previously done so far in the last three years, I was thinking about this as a deal. And you've talked about it, haven't we? A lot. This started off with just me thinking, I want to tell my story. I was in quite an abusive relationship, and I wanted women to take from that that they could carry on and tell my story, really. And then I started to think, I want to create a platform for the women have their say. So there's a lot of different things we started with Hear Her Roar, which was a project telling other women's stories.

JoJo Kirtley (05:56)

And we've worked with female veterans. And just before the pandemic, we're working in an ambulance with a group of women there, and they were answering the question, what do all Northumberland women really want? And they actually got up and performed. So there's kind of two different things that work. You take it to produce professional players. But then we also work in the communities with women and retell their real stories or get them to retell their real stories.

Sarah Hughes (06:27)

Making sure that women have a voice, really, which is mega important. So coming back to the podcasts, we started to compile a list, and we have the people who we want to interview. So who was on both of your wish lists? Who did you want to talk to and hear about?

JoJo Kirtley (06:47)

I think number one was definitely going to be Elaine from Newcastle Women's Aid, you know, at that time I was thinking, who is going to want to talk because I know we're seeing every woman had a story, but we were all living it.

Sarah Hughes (07:07)

And some women possibly still don't want to talk about it.

JoJo Kirtley (07:10)

There's a lot of women that wanted to talk about what's happened to them. And I hadn't really spoken to Elaine for a while. And I was just thinking, what is she going through right now? Like working with different women. So she was definitely number one on my list of people that I wanted to interview.

Lindsay Nicholson (07:33)

Well, I think we've mainly went through your list of interviews, haven't we, women's, obviously, Elaine, definitely because of domestic abuse is kind of one of the things that we sort of explore interrogate quite a lot. Now we work and we work quite closely with Women's Aid before, like, we have a close relationship with Women's Aid, unfortunately, because the nature of the time, I don't think we've had the time to interview all the voices.

Sarah Hughes (08:02)

We could have interviewed 20 people easily. After that first chat that we had.

JoJo Kirtley (08:09)

It was funding as well.

Lindsay Nicholson (08:11)

But we got to hear a lot of voices through workshops. So although we don't like, for instance, we didn't interview a friend of mine who works with crisis and street homeless people during the pandemic. We still had her in a workshop and got to hear her experiences. We did three to four workshops with about 15 or 20 women in each one with a variety of diverse lived experiences and struggles through the pandemic.

Sarah Hughes (08:36)

I feel like we got a really broad group of voices.

JoJo Kirtley (08:42)

And on top of the workshops we then sent out because we knew that people might be too busy or didn't want to talk that way. So we're thinking, what other ways can we get people to engage in this project? And we came up with a survey where women could then answer it anonymously, so they didn't have to give their name and what they could if they wanted to.

Sarah Hughes (09:02)

We got some great responses to that. Sometimes that anonymity just frees you off.

JoJo Kirtley (09:07)

I think there was some good rants, a lot of really good material, if you like, but if really shocking things that happened that we got from the surveys that people had said, if you want to talk to us as well.

There's a couple of women that rang and said, Can I just ask you bits and pieces as well? So, yeah. So that was a survey. Then we did a kind of call out for a pandemic portrait. Women could send in like a picture if they wanted to, which is going to be included in the film.

JoJo Kirtley (09:41)

And then screams, yes.

Sarah Hughes (09:44)

Tell us about the screams. Where did that idea come from? And how has that been?

Lindsay Nicholson (09:49)

Because I'm always reading New York Times and articles. And it was the New York Times that did this article called Primal Scream.

Lindsay Nicholson (10:00)

In particular, looking at mothers working mothers in America and the mental health crisis that they were just all at breaking point, exhausted and overwhelmed and struggling and neglected and forgotten about. And also, I guess through that all that struggles and feeling like a failure as a mother because obviously the capacity is just absolutely maxed out.

Sarah Hughes (10:29)

And I think that's still going on. I've just been to a slightly off topic. I've just been away for a 40th birthday, began with a lot of women. And that is a massively common theme amongst the mothers that there's this kind of perception that we're all getting back to normal and the kids are back in school. But it's like being hit by a tree.

JoJo Kirtley (10:48)

Yeah, there's no normal anymore. And I hate it when people say that we're getting back to normal. Actually, we're not my best friend's daughter I had covered last week and that's it. They were like ice cream for ten days that she's not at work. And so I think we're kind of seeing normal smokes, isn't it? So we're like, well, we're getting back to normal. But actually, we're not because I've still got it in the back of my mind is my son. And that's it. He's going to look after the kids when I met to be with him those kind of things.

Lindsay Nicholson (11:25)

Like over the pond. They are feeling exactly the same. Excuse me. I'm not mother can only drawn witness your experience. And then you go on this article called Primal Scream and everything like graphically. It was stunning. And it just cut through the noise. And they created, like, a phone line, like not a houseline where there was some marriage or a counsellor at the end. It was just a number. You could just dial up and just scream into the void, basically.

Lindsay Nicholson (11:51)

But they recorded it. And so it's all these sound bites of just women screaming. And whether it was screaming or just crying going to feel like a terrible mother feel that I'm feeling or just really let it out, even laughing, but also with rage, screaming. And I was just like, JoJo, I'll look at this exactly can feel kind of what we're trying to do artistically. It was just one of them look at how they're doing it. Isn't it great? And just like, yes, we hear you over here.

JoJo Kirtley (12:23)

And I remember listening to it because it's like an interactive article where you just press on the buttons and have people screaming. I was just crying, thinking I feel the same.

Sarah Hughes (12:35)

I feel the same. Well, that brings me quite nicely on because I wanted to start to talk a little bit more broadly about how the pandemic has affected women and your thoughts on all of that. If we kind of cast our minds back what feels like a million years ago now to the start of the pandemic, or maybe even that, like two or three week period before the lockdown came. I don't know about you, but that was the point where my anxiety was off the chart. By the time the lockdown actually came, I was chilled.

Sarah Hughes (13:07)

I was absolutely fine by that point. All my anxiety had really built up in the kind of weeks leading up to it. But I remember thinking when that lockdown came, this is going to be the great level. Now everyone's going to be so poor by the end of this and everyone's going to have to pull together. And obviously I was incredibly silly and optimistic, which is why I do things like, set up. The good thing is, though, because I always am trying to look on the bright side.

Sarah Hughes (13:37)

But what were your kind of overriding emotions and what were your concerns for women, particularly at that stage?

JoJo Kirtley (13:52)

Personally, I just found out I was pregnant, so I was in deep shock thinking not just because I found out I was pregnant.

JoJo Kirtley (14:01)

But.

JoJo Kirtley (14:04)

I didn't know what was going to happen. I got a phone call of the RVI saying, Come in for your scan a little bit earlier and I was thinking, that's nice, but they were actually they were ahead of the game. We were ahead of the game. Bless them.

Speaker 3 (14:23)

JoJo Kirtley (14:23)

We were working in Amble with this group of women, and they were doing this. It was for International Women's Day, this great play that was on. And we were still talking to each other because it's really hard to say this, but it's like, do you believe Boris Johnson was saying, you just didn't know, did you? Obviously like the back one on my mind personally, but as things started to lockdown, you see, it was the opposite for me. My anxiety started to get more and more and more because then these horrific stories were coming out like Ruth Williams, who was murdered five days. It went into the pandemic. I could say that women were losing their safety, their autonomy, their jobs. I was kind of hearing from not just my friends and family. Obviously. Like I said, articles will come in into the media about women and what was happening to them across the world. They weren't being educated, if you like I said they were losing their jobs. They were being pushed to the front lines without PPE. It was that story of the woman on the train station ticket. She was in London and she was spat on and she died of Covid. It was like what is going on here?

Sarah Hughes (15:37)

Yeah. And it was like, kind of like, is that real?

Sarah Hughes (15:41)

Yeah. That was definitely my kind of I don't know if that is like a self protective measure, but that I just felt like it was just almost like a parallel universe. I kept almost that grief, grief. You know, this when you wake up in the morning and for that split second, you've forgotten that it's happening, and then it comes back and hits you again. I kind of was definitely experiencing that. What about you?

Lindsay Nicholson (16:10)

Yeah, definitely had grief. I was grieving for a while because I remember the week before we went into the actual kind of stay home, locked down for everyone. I just lost all my work. It came in like waves in one day in phone calls, and at the end of the day, I was like, shell shocked. I was like, everything's just stopped. And my boss told me not to come in not to come back here. This odd projects no longer going ahead. And I was just like, oh, what's happening?

Lindsay Nicholson (16:38)

So I didn't know when I was going to work again. I was green because I'm massively invested in my work.

Lindsay Nicholson (16:44)

It's community.

Lindsay Nicholson (16:44)

It's passionate creativity, helping others voices. So I am extremely invested and involved in my work. And I didn't know when I could get any of that back. So I was grieving that as well as probably other things. But it was definitely that kind of emotion. And then there was the fear from the start. Unfortunately, JoJo and I know a bit about domestic abuse. It was just instantly the fear of, like, this is

not fair enough time. I want to stay home but what is home to some people?

Lindsay Nicholson (17:15)

And it was just frustrating that no one was going booted or I understand it might not be good for some people. It was just like, do your bit for everyone else. Stay home. And it took no consideration of how do we support people. Home is not a safe space. And as JoJo has mentioned, then, straight away, you just start seeing murders of women again. And it was just frustrating because it was like, we need to acknowledge this threat, too. But again, it's just partially from where I come from.

Lindsay Nicholson (17:48)

This project, anger creeping the people who aren't safe, you know, all these kind of the vulnerable voices and the people that we're not looking after.

JoJo Kirtley (17:59)

Yeah, another one. They are so much harder to reach and hear their voices. And I think it took such a long time, didn't it, for them to put any of those safety measures in place. I remember I would like to say when I think it was a few weeks in before they kind of said, you can leave your home if you are being abused within the home. That wasn't just a given.

Sarah Hughes (18:23)

People didn't know it first. No talk about getting arrested if you went out.

Lindsay Nicholson (18:26)

You know what?

Lindsay Nicholson (18:26)

It was all like, chaotic. And it hadn't been sort of laid out.

JoJo Kirtley (18:30)

The army were going to come in.

Sarah Hughes (18:31)

Yeah. You're going to get fined.

JoJo Kirtley (18:34)

And I think you think of the vulnerable people in society. And I think of the people that I've worked with in the past, young people, disabled people, the elderly. I just kind of went right. I'm not seeing me, Nana, because I'm scared that I'm going to give it to her. I never thought about her mental health. I remember during a workshop, somebody actually said something along the lines of I know it's been horrible for younger people, but they've got a future. What about the elderly in this country divide that being targeted, obviously by coronavirus, the dying, if you like.

JoJo Kirtley (19:11)

But then all of us being completely left. I mean, I was waving at my Nana and she lives on her own, and she's in the 90s. I think that was part of the problem.

Sarah Hughes (19:20)

Wasn't it, that nobody has had a good deal out of this. And everybody kind of formed the quick, natural response to a certain group. Maybe that you were more concerned about women or more concerned. I personally was losing a lot of sleep over kids from abusive homes. That was the one that got me round the twist, but I think nobody came out of it as well as we could have hoped. That the word. So I wanted to ask you, the name of this project is Woman Up.

Sarah Hughes (19:59)

And we've discussed this loads, obviously, between us. Was it an impulse or was it an expectation on women to Womxn up? And become more resilient? Did you feel that?

JoJo Kirtley (20:12)

I just remember this conversation me and Lindsay had quite a few times because we're ringing each other nearly every day at one point that will read and saying I don't think I can cope. I really genuinely didn't think I could. I was hormonal. I was homeschooling. I was in the right state, obviously. Like I said, I was worried about a lot of people in my family, my friends. And then this huge worry about what was happening to women in abusive relationships, all that going on, worrying about people and that.

JoJo Kirtley (20:43)

And then I just think, do I have to, like, question in that, like, for my own mental health? Do you have to warm up? It's like that man up thing, isn't it? Man up, like, do we actually have to do that? I know it's like a feminist kind of tag that you get T shirts with woman up on. And that's been the mantra that was kind of like, gone by. But was that mantra created for a pandemic? Yeah.

Sarah Hughes (21:11)

Exactly.

JoJo Kirtley (21:12)

So that's why there's a question mark.

Sarah Hughes (21:14)

But I think as well the concept of 'womaning up' sounds like you've made a choice to be strong. And I've personally had people say, oh, my God, I can't believe you set that charity of doing that. And that was really strong. And I thought, I think it was completely selfish in a lot of ways because it was a means for me to have something else to focus on and to not be overwhelmed by the daily News figures and becoming glued to Sky News and stuff. And other women might have done their woman up in a completely different way by being a fabulous home schooler when I was absolutely shit.

Sarah Hughes (21:57)

And other women might have done their woman up bit by taking meals to elderly neighbours and all the rest of it just we've got to be careful not to assume that it looks like strength.

JoJo Kirtley (22:10)

Exactly, because I think it was just four different because we were living in ... I don't know if it was Lindsay. You might have said this to me. I think it was like if you can get up in the morning and brush your hair, you've achieved something.

Sarah Hughes (22:22)

But there is a lot of guilt, I think, and I've said it myself, too. There's a mam in the schoolyard who just got a complete girl crush on, and she's a palliative of care nurse. And I've said to her so many times and I've talked to her about she's just literally been helping people die in that whole first horrible way of in the care homes. And I've kind of been really in awe of her. And she says exactly that back to me that it looks like different things for different people.

Sarah Hughes (22:56)

I'm speaking for myself here. I don't know how you do feel, but I certainly was in a really nice, cushy, privileged position where really, I didn't need to woman up all that much because I've got a nice life, three healthy children, a husband who's very supportive and all the rest of it. There's probably a lot of women who we work with who would not have had that privilege to be able to go. Actually, I need to look after my mental health today and back off. Some people have just been on the hamster wheel.

JoJo Kirtley (23:31)

I think that's one of the reasons why I wanted to do this project and set it in the Northeast as well, because I wanted to tell those stories. So the idea is to have a podcast of obviously, this introduction that we're doing now and then I have response, please. And the response, please, is to all of the research, all of the interviews and workshops and all those kinds of things. And the idea is we've took on well, obviously, me and Sarah are right in two of the plays.

JoJo Kirtley (24:00)

And then Olivia Hannah is right in the third play. We'd like to have written more like you said before, would like to have interviewed more women, but obviously funding has stopped.

Sarah Hughes (24:09)

You'd like to give us any more plays in us?

Lindsay Nicholson (24:13)

Absolutely.

Sarah Hughes (24:14)

Ten more Plays.

JoJo Kirtley (24:17)

I'd like to spend more money employing more women as well.

Lindsay Nicholson (24:17)

We're looking to get money from National Lottery Heritage Fund, which is great because one of the most important things is about making this part of our heritage and documenting it fairly where it's interrogated what sort of happened, the experience for women and people who have lived experience of female being a woman. But we also kind of went in for other funding. Babes, we weren't very successful. JoJo, the film she's making, she got money from Comic Relief Groundworks, but we needed more to not just create opportunities and jobs for people, but to interview people, to talk to people, to workshop with them.

Lindsay Nicholson (25:00)

So we would absolutely love to have done more plays.

Sarah Hughes (25:03)

But we just I mean, isn't it as time goes on, I just wanted to ask you kind of as we are getting to this point where people are saying life is getting back to normal, whether you believe that or not, what are your concerns now? What do you think needs to happen and change at a governmental level, societal level? I know that's a huge question, but is there anything that you think you'd love to see happen to improve things for the better?

JoJo Kirtley (25:39)

I mean, I read this amazing article. I reread it again last night by Eve Ensler who's, like a woman's right? Yeah. She's changed her name to See Now.

Sarah Hughes (25:48)

I had missed that one.

JoJo Kirtley (25:50)

Yeah. Follow on Instagram. She's amazing. It's called Disaster Patriarchy, how the Pandemic has unleashed a war on women. And I feel like that's exactly what's happened. And I know that people might feel like that's very dramatic. But it is true if you look at the research, but not just from the UN rules. I funded, like a report about how the Pandemic had a massive impact on women's organisations in this country, the four set society. I mean, there's been all the reports about disabled women being affected and what's happened to them.

JoJo Kirtley (26:28)

She's interviewed all the women. So she's kind of doing what we've done. But in her way. And she's interviewed women worldwide from Kenya to India. And it's been very similar. What's happened to them? They've had their safety taken away from them, their security, their economic safety, if you like. And financially, they've been burdened as well. And the career roles that they have to take on all those kind of things. And I feel like, what can we do? We change it. I think these projects are great funding

these projects to let people know.

JoJo Kirtley (27:05)

So it highlights exactly what happened, because I think a lot of people go, really that happened, that really happened. I can't believe that.

Sarah Hughes (27:10)

I've seen just as many men lose their jobs as women.

JoJo Kirtley (27:14)

Maybe funding those kinds of research at a University level and organisations doing that. But let's get back to the grassroots of these things. Fund these women's organisations like Newcastle, Women's Aid and fund these kind of organisations that are supporting women, don't take the funding away from them and expect them to do it. It's very for free, all that kind of thing. Yeah, as well. I think for me.

JoJo Kirtley (27:41)

That would be really important.

JoJo Kirtley (27:43)

I think if you look at the NHS, that could have done with a lot more funding. I mean, I know it's done amazingly. And the Vaccination programme has been amazing, but that's been because of the people who work for the NHS. I think funding is a massive thing and funding the right organisations as well.

Lindsay Nicholson (28:11)

Yes, it was exactly that. For me, it's a problem, like what needs to be taken and looked at from this is just how quickly we kind of rolled back 50 years and just default. It proved to me that patriarchy is default because many of the crisis hit straight away. But when women are the ones expecting, stay at home, home schooling, do all the unpaid Labour again, all the domesticate stuff, put their careers on hold or pause or sacrifice their words altogether at the same time, you get another basic health needs and stuff like people's contraception or midwives appointments.

Lindsay Nicholson (28:49)

All of that just know that can't happen because we've got this threat, which is understandable it's hard to manage. But that really for me, needs to interrogate why we slid back that way. And if something like this happens again, it cannot go the same way for women. We really need to interrogate that. I don't know how we do that in a society that's so patriarchal anyway, but that's for us, for me personally, why we want this in a Museum. We want this accession so that when years me has decades, generations come, people don't get this.

Lindsay Nicholson (29:20)

Oh, it was a time when everyone came together your big banana bread and had lovely family do stuff over zoom like, no, it was harsh.

Sarah Hughes (29:29)

It was the real tendency to put on their rose tinted glasses.

(29:35)

Absolutely.

Speaker 1 (29:36)

When they're looking at a period of history that was unique.

Lindsay Nicholson (29:41)

Yeah. Or even letting you know the powers that they kind of wash it in other ways. Let's get some real voices documenting this. Let's get it accessioned somewhere where the legacy people can see it forever. God, that was the truth of the time. Then hopefully they're not fighting the same thing.

Sarah Hughes (30:00)
Our children are going to be listening to this.

Sarah Hughes (30:02)
Go.

Sarah Hughes (30:03)
I can't believe it was that tough.

JoJo Kirtley (30:04)
I was thinking like, I want my daughter to be like. If I'm feeling like that, that's what I want other girls and the next generation. And that's part of why we wanted to kind of fund from the heritage fund. Yeah, because we want to kind of say this is exactly what happened. I think also something that's really important to mention as well. I think if we're going to learn anything from this, then we need to educate people. We need to educate boys, young boys.

JoJo Kirtley (30:36)
I know we have these conversations. We've got two boys, haven't we? Because we can't ignore this explosion of violence that's happened globally to women, not just this isn't just something that's happening in the US. This is happening. Even recently, there's been another murder of a woman walking home. It's just we need to explore that and ask those questions. Why is it happening, being.

Sarah Hughes (31:09)
Positive that we can take from this hellish experience for all of us?

Lindsay Nicholson (31:19)
I mean, personally, I can only think personally, individually.

Lindsay Nicholson (31:25)
I can't really think of anything collective.

Sarah Hughes (31:27)
Collectively. I think what has happened within the general public is that there's a better appreciation for key workers. And when I think key workers, I think maybe female because they've been undervalued and underpaid for so long. And the vast majority of our nursing women and finally, people are standing up and saying, pay the teachers more pay the nurses more value unpaid carers. Again, the vast majority of whom are women. So that would be my I know I'm clutching at straws, and that would be my positive team.

JoJo Kirtley (32:16)
There are a little bit of positive stories that have come out through some of the research. I feel like there's been a push towards some of the women talked about feeling like they want to be more politically active, definitely. And I was like.

Sarah Hughes (32:30)
Wow, who suddenly if I'd asked them two years ago who the Prime Minister was, they would have been like, and now I'm not going to say that they're right on, but they are interested and engaged because they realise that it affects them, even if they don't really want to be interested in it.

JoJo Kirtley (32:52)
Yeah. I feel like I value my relationships more massively, one person positive. And I have to say this is that I had a healthy little girl and I forgot that you can imagine this is in a Museum and her grandchildren. Gordon, listen, she is just an absolute gem. And I think she has gotten me through the really dark times. I do feel like there's been a massive loss. I do feel that's what came out of the research, I've been the person who's kind of read all the surveys.

JoJo Kirtley (33:43)

Over 80 women answered the surveys. I've listened all the interviews, I've been in normal workshops, and I had to feel like in the Northeast, there was a huge loss, whether it was a loss of jobs. I was going to say financially finance those kind of things, even down the kind of like stories coming out where miscarriages those things on their own, people having to do that on their own. So it lost is a massive theme that's come out of this research. And I know which one of our positives, but I cannot end this without actually mentioning that's the kind of thing that for me.

Sarah Hughes (34:25)

And they come out in the plays as well, of course.

JoJo Kirtley (34:28)

Yeah. But it wasn't just because the whole pandemic was about loss, wasn't it? Because obviously, people were dying. But for me, the research that we were looking at, it's just the loss of just like you say, people their mental health. It could be anything. There was some stories of real heartache that came out of it. And yeah, there was some positives where people kept saying that I actually thought there was going to be loads of stories. This is what was really surprising to me. Those stories of people saying I hated my husband and I left him, but actually there wasn't.

Speaker 2 (35:05)

It was actually more stories of people going, you know, what I kind of fell back in love or I appreciated my partner a lot more. I don't get me wrong. There's a lot of resentment for pregnant women, for their partners because I think we're thinking of their life, including me. But no, I think again, it goes back to that relationship.

Sarah Hughes (35:23)

If you are lucky enough to be in a good relationship or a good, strong family unit, then possibly they probably got stronger. But as we've seen, there's so many people who are on the other side of that coin.

Sarah Hughes (35:38)

That was a lovely chat.

Sarah Hughes (35:47)

Workie Theatre Company is proud to present three brand new audio response plays and a short film, all inspired by our research and written, performed, directed and produced by women from the north. WomXn up? Has been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The podcasts are presented by Me Sarah Hughes produced by Workie Ticket and edited by Studio 26.