



**Please, tell us about yourself, where were you born and raised? What did your family do for a living? Did you have any siblings? What was life like growing up in childhood?**

I had a great childhood. Born and raised in Glasgow, I grew up on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of a multi storey in the days before growing up in a multi storey meant you were deprived. There were loads of kids my age and we played hide and seek in the graveyard and had huge games of two man hunt.

I had two big brothers who were super protective, great when I was young but not so great when I wanted a boyfriend, and a wee brother who was born when I was 12.

My dad was a builder, a real man's man, and my mum cleaned schools.

**What is the earliest childhood memory you can remember?**

My first clear memory is when I was about 4. I had a new bike and we were visiting family, course I insisted on taking the bike. On the way home there was a steep hill to go down and off I went on the new bike. I quickly realised I was going too fast and had no idea how to stop, dragging the toes of my shoes wasn't helping this time and at no point had anyone mentioned 'brakes' to me. The only way I could think of to stop was to grab onto a passing lamppost in a bear hug. I thought it was pretty inventive and wasn't that perturbed by the incident. My mum on the other hand was freaking out; she had me at the bottom of the hill under a car. Never a very calm woman - my mum.

**What education course did you follow? Where did life take you after this?**

School was a strange time for me. I was pretty clever but not at all interested and I was also a smoker from about 14. So I could pass exams and get high marks in my class work without really trying but didn't fit in with the brainy ones because I smoked then I was too much of a teacher's pet to fit in with the smokers.

I left school as soon as I could with 3 pretty crap O levels and went to work in a factory (hated it!). I was married with a wee girl by 19 but it wasn't a great relationship and it finished by the time I was 24. After that I did a few different things like working in pubs and snack vans until I got my taxi badge then I drove a taxi for 16 years which was ideal because I was now a single parent and it gave me the freedom I needed to be a mum (plenty of times I'd decide it was too sunny to work-we're going to the beach!) along with the income to keep the house going.

In 2006 Lindsey (my daughter) started at University and I decided that it was time to get up of my ass and went to college to do an Intro to Counselling course part time. I was hooked and the following year I did the COCA Counselling Skills Course at college then my Post Grad in Person Centred Counselling at Uni from 2008-2010.

I'm just right now in the process of applying for my master's so fingers crossed!!

**Would you like to share how you got involved in Mental Health?**

I've had a long time interest in mental health issues. My wee brother was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was pretty young and I had seen how the system dealt with it. I couldn't



understand it, if it's an illness why does he seem to be being punished for it? And why is nobody telling us anything? I thought there must be a better way but I couldn't find anyone who agreed. So when I was training for my counselling Post Grad I was lucky enough to come across HVN in Dundee and I approached them to offer my services as a counsellor there over the summer holidays. Thankfully they agreed and I was there for 12 weeks, by the end of it I knew what I wanted to do. It had only taken me till I was 40!

Unfortunately my mum, who had been ill for some time, passed away just at the end of my PG course in 2010. Things understandably came to a standstill for a while. I was working in home care but really struggling with their interpretation of 'person centred'. It took me ages to realise the reason I was lost (and often in conflict with them) when I was talking to them about care packages etc was because we were talking about completely different approaches and it was THEM who were getting it wrong. I actually understand the person centred approach as it was meant to be used. At the same time as I was at uni my daughter was completing her Honours in Sociology and Social Policy, she had started in nursing but didn't like it so left and tried something different. She was interested in mental health too and had done some research as part of her degree and we found that our ideas and approaches, mine person centred and hers sociological, had many similarities. I was fed up at my work and wanted to do something that I wanted to do but there was little opportunity for a person centred counsellor to work with 'complex and enduring mental health issues' and there was no provision at all for voice hearers. I spent a lot of time moaning about how unfair it was and one night in May 2011 Lindsey said 'Why don't we just apply for some money and start a group of our own?' That's what we did and here we are.

### **Please tell us about Time & Space?**

Time and Space is a person centred service for voice hearers in Glasgow.

We offer peer support groups, open ended person centred counselling and one to one work where we can help with practical things

to help keep the stress levels down or we can do some voice work or pretty much whatever the person needs. We have 5 volunteer counsellors who are all trainees and we give them some extra training about voice hearing, self harm and that type of thing. Our members can choose whatever support they feel would be most helpful and can dip in and out as much as they need.

We feel that the range of support is important, not everyone likes groups but they might benefit from the one to one work. For some people the counselling is the most important, everyone has different needs.

We open all day on a Wednesday for one to one work and groups and a Monday evening for counselling.





Lindsey and I work together on a Wednesday along with a volunteer, Debbie, who is also a counsellor.

We have very little money but it's amazing just how far you can go when you're doing something you love (that sounds really cheesy but it's true).

There isn't any mystery about what we do, we treat people like adults and work with them to find ways they can manage their voices and pick their lives up again.

Simply, we offer them our 'time' and enough 'space' to work on their own recovery.

**What has been some of the personal highlights of your career of running Time & Space?**

My most favourite thing about work is working alongside my daughter. We get on really well and work well together. We've dragged each other through the hard times at the start when it seemed like nothing would happen and there is probably nobody else in the world who would have stuck with it alongside me.

All of my personal highlights are probably seeing our members coming out of their shells and doing things they haven't done for years because their voices wouldn't let them. One member has started using the train, first time he's used public transport on his own for nearly 10 years.

I'm constantly amazed and pretty humbled by what people can achieve if they are given the chance.

**Do you have any 'coping strategies' that you use?**

Oh, coping strategies?? I smoke, does that count? I also embrace my road rage, shouting at the car in front who is taking too long at the lights is great for getting out the frustration, just remember to keep your window up you don't want them to actually hear what you're saying about them.

But no I don't really have coping strategies, I just push my way through obstacles and jump straight into things without thinking about consequences. It's not the best way to live.....

**What projects are you currently working on with Time & Space?**

In response to our members, we started a swimming group for women with experience of self harm. We have secured exclusive use of a pool and changing areas etc every Tuesday. We had £1,000 and it was meant to run for 6 weeks but we managed to find 2 absolutely brilliant lifeguards who are working for free which allowed us to extend to 20 weeks. It was meant to finish on 4<sup>th</sup> June as we were running out of funding then we got a mystery donation of £300 meaning that we can run till the end of July and we will hopefully be able to find more money to continue it in the meantime.

We are also looking to start a young person's group in the next month or two because we now have a couple of younger members and they need a bit of space of their own.

Through our experience at Time and Space we have developed an 'Intro to Voices' workshop that we can offer to other services.

We are also hoping to start a voices group in one of the prisons. We are talking to two prisons at the moment but it is a long process.



**PsyCope 'Coping with Psychosis'**  
Feature of the Month – July 2013  
Elaine Weir, Time & Space

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**What does the future hold for you?**

Hopefully, my Master's degree by 2015 and I would love to write loads of really influential books about mental health and voice hearing but, as you can see, when I write it just turns into a big chat so maybe not...

We want to get a place of our own so we can expand on the work we are doing and also do more work with self-harm.

We would also like to do something around the issues facing male survivors of sexual abuse but groups don't seem to be the thing, maybe men aren't comfortable sitting in groups talking? We are looking at it though.

**Favourite Quote?**

*"...We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time..."*  
- From *Little Gidding* by T S Elliot

**You can catch all this and more of Time & Space at:**

[https://timeandspace-scotland.github.io/timeandspace\\_website/index.html](https://timeandspace-scotland.github.io/timeandspace_website/index.html)