Mother 13

17 years daughter

Interviewer: OK, the recording’s started. Could you just start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: Yep um, I’m 51 err I work, always lived in and around (location). Um, I’m a single mum, I split up from my husband about two and a half years ago. Um, I have two children. I have (name) who’s 17 and a son (name) who’s on the spectrum who’s 15.

Interviewer: OK, and when you say spectrum you mean the autism spectrum

Participant: Yes, err well kind of classed now as. He’s high functioning so he doesn’t really need any help with anything at the moment. He did when he was younger but it’s all fine and dandy now so… just call it like a mild aspergers.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit about how your daughter is getting on at school…

Participant: She’s at college now, she’s just started her second year. She’s at (name) college. She’s doing health and social care, sociology, and English language.

Interviewer: Interesting subjects

Participant: Yeah, she’s desperate to be a teacher.

Interviewer: That’s lovely, nice career. So can you tell me a bit about your living arrangements. Is it you, your son and daughter living at home?

Participant: Yes it is, we rent accommodation here in a small village and it’s private rent.

Interviewer: And how about things you do in your spare time?

Participant: Right yes, I help out with a local amateur dramatics, I’m going to see them next week. They’ve got a show on and I’m helping out. Usually I help out with costumes and makeup that sort of thing. And I also like gardening a lot, um I’ve had a good session in the garden this year this season. Lots of fruit and veg and flowers erm oh and I’ve just taken up swimming again, I used to do swimming a while back um but it’s just purely for health reasons I want to take that up now because I’m well and truly in the menopause so yes it’s err I go about once a week, maybe twice if I’m lucky. I do lots of walks as well, I’m also a member of the national trust so I like going for long walks in the countryside.

Interviewer: What type of things do you do as a family?

Participant: We do go for walks to the national trust places. See I work in a school myself so it’s certainly helps in the summer holidays as a family we can do things so we do go off and about. Last week or week before we took a couple of days out and went to (Location) so we had a nice couple of days up there, nice break. When they were younger we used to do lots more nice things together because they weren't so interested in iphones and all of that. So lots of games, board games we used to play a lot of. We used to go out to, I had a season ticket for the local zoo down here and also (theme park) we had a season ticket for so if they had an inset day I’d take them down there. When they were younger I wasn’t actually working I was doing housekeeping but I used to fit that around them um but nowadays it’s not really the same because they’re teenagers and they want to do their own thing. They’ve got their friends so I’m more of a taxi service at the moment. My daughter’s got her own friends and as of about 3 months ago, she’s got a serious boyfriend that she met at College so they take it in turns. He’s just passed his driving test so he comes down to here usually about once a week or every other week and then we alternate it and she would go stay at his house. Cause he’s not local you see, he lives in (location) which is a good hour in the car away from where we are. Um, nice young chap. Same age as (daughter). He’s doing an engineering course at the same college.

Interviewer: Um, so would it be alright to talk about (daughter), when she started her periods and things like that?

Participant: Sure, well it was quite weird because the day she started, cause I was just jotting down some information when she was here last because I said obviously you would be phoning. She actually started 4 years ago. It was in March I think. It was when she had, it was a day that she had an injection at school I think it was um and then that evening she went to a friends house and that’s when she came on (laughs) the worst time bless her. It wasn’t a heavy period or anything so that was OK but she obviously had the pain and she knew that was what it probably would be. She showed me the next day and said ‘just wondering, is this a period’ and she showed me and I said ah yes it is (laughs).

Interviewer: Was she staying at her friends over night then?

Participant: She was, she was staying at a friend’s house and she didn’t feel she could say ‘oh what’s this?’ but I had said to her you always must keep them with you and she uses tampons now anyway. She has for a year or so. But she was very frightened of you know, inserting them and she didn't know how to do it. In actual fact, I actually showed her how to do it which was a good thing really because it’s given her more freedom if she wants to go out with her friends. And she does have quite… at the beginning obviously she does have the boyfriend in tow now… she’s on the pill, she’s on the pill called rigevidon but she’s only been on that a month. She just started that last month. It was just the last two days of that pill free week that she came on so she’s fine with that. I'd say she’s eating more. I don’t know if that’s anything to do with that. It could just be the fact that she’s you know, with the boy of her dreams and it’s all going fine and dandy and maybe it’s just comfort eating you don’t know. But it’s a good thing because for a long time she wouldn’t eat breakfast. She has just started eating breakfast again now before she goes off to college um so yes.

Interviewer: You mentioned she had pain just before she first came on. How long did that start?

Participant: Um probably, errr, um, the first one didn’t really could, the following month she started getting pain but the worst pain for her has been before she started using the pill and she, the last year she was kind of getting really bad pains. I think it was the day, the first day she’d take some pain relief and by that evening it would all be gone.

Interviewer: Does the pain start before she comes on or at the same time?

Participant: Oh, good point. No I think it’s just before.

Interviewer: So when she did first start getting pains, you mentioned the bad pain. How did she talk to you ab out that?

Participant: She did yeah, she’s very open about it and we had lots of hugs. Lots of hugs and kisses. To be honest I did say to her I didn't want her to take too much pain relief because neurofen is quite strong and as children they didn’t take much pain relief because I was lucky, they weren't sickly kids and I didn't want her to become dependent on it every month so I said only take it if it’s really really painful. Um, I know she carries a packet with her. Um yes she would be quite open about it, about period pain and she’s open with her friends about it as well. Same old thing, why is it us girls that have to put up with it and men don’t type of thing. Um, but yes so, she was quite open to me about it. I could tell she would get a bit stress and a bit abrupt in her you know, she’s not her usual happy go lucky self, just a bit abrupt and stress about it all.

Interviewer: Yeah, did that change from when she had pain to that year when she had bad pain?

Participant: No it was about the same I think. She was, um, this year she had a day off college cause she was so, in quite a lot of pain. Also, I don't know whether this ties up but it was also when she was first going out with james so I don’t know whether… cause she was having intercourse so I don’t know if that was something to do with her body obviously changing when she was having intercourse I don't know.

Interviewer: Is that that only time she’d taken time off school for it?

Participant: Yeah it was, she didn’t have any time off school. She might have had a half day. But she’s like me, tend to come on on a Friday afternoon or a Saturday. Um, and I can’t remember the pill she’s taking, she’s back on the pills again.

Interviewer: Did she go on the pill because she started up with a serious boyfriend or to help with the pain?

Participant: No, it was because of the boyfriend?

Interviewer: OK, and has it helped with the pain?

Participant: Err as I say it’s too early to say cause it’s only the first 3 weeks she’s been taking them.

Interviewer: Has she taken any other things to help the pain?

Participant: Yeah, we’ve tried um hot water bottle on the tummy, um, oh there’s a herbal remedy… I can’t remember… I made it up… we tried that but I think it was just fluke that by the following day she didn't have any more pain. As I say, it’s usually nurofen that she takes or a hot water bottle or something or an early night or take lots of water. I always say to her especially during the time of the month when you’re losing fluids

Interviewer: Do any of those things particularly work or comfort her?

Participant: I think the nurofen erm but also like as I say with the water. Now that she’s on the pill, if she knows she’s going to have a period that’ll start tomorrow at six o’clock she can prepare herself.

Interviewer: Are there any other symptoms that she gets?

Participant: Um, no, no she’s. Like I say she’s just very short. Very.. um happy go lucky kid. Um and err she’s, I always know when she’s about to come on because she’s just not… it’ll just be one word sentances whereas before it would be a lengthy one (laughs) and you just know to back off a bit but it’s, I mean it’s, I suppose yeah we’ve had a few little tiffs with boyfriend and things that have happened and I’ve said things to her and it’s been, she’s been on the defensive but she’s 17 so you know. It’s the age gap isn’t it I’m too old and she’s too young. Baring in mind I’ve got a son who’s just turned 15, I’m going through the menopause and my daughters just put herself on the pill.

Interviewer: Has she ever been to the doctors about period pain?

Participant: No, I don’t think so. It’s been about other things not period pain at all. So no, not as far as I know.

Interviewer: Has she ever considered going to the doctors? Can you tell me why she hasn’t? Has it ever been anything that you’ve thought about?

Participant: For the period pain?

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: Yeah cause I think she just realises it’s part and parcel of being a young adult, being female. Um obviously if I could see that really having an effect on her, if she was really becoming withdrawn or she was you know look like she was on death’s door. Also what you’ve got to bear in mind now, I can’t really make an appointment for her, she’s at the age now where I’m you know, I, she’s independent from me so she has to make her own appointments for the doctors and that sort of thing but if I could see and I could sense that there was something more wrong I’d say no I think you need to and I know she would say OK and if she wanted me to go along then I would um but I don't think she has um. It’s gonna be interesting to find out when she settles down having the pill, whether the flow is heavier or lighter, I should think it would probably become lighter and um she can kind of plan ahead with boyfriends and stuff

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. Did you go to the doctors with her when she went to get put on the pill?

Participant: I did ask if she wanted me to go erm and she said no it’s absolutely fine mum, I’ll be absolutely fine, I’m OK going on my own. I said it’s totally up to you, if you want me to come I’m more than happy to. She did book a time when err I think I was at work but I had just finished work and I contacted her again because I was picking my son up from school and luckily the surgery is just across the road from where the school is so I was in the car park. I said, I’m here if you want me to come, she said honestly it’s no problem. So I waited there for her and she said yeah it’s all done and dusted, I’ve got the packet here blah blah blah and she went through it with me and she’s read all the information about it so she’s quite clued up. She’s got a lot of common sense that one.

Interviewer: Did you, when she was deciding, did you talk about it together or was it…

ParticipantL Oh yes, yeah we did and I think she had a good chat with (boyfriend) about it as well because I think for him it’s his first serious relationship.. (daughter) has had a couple of, not serious relationships but a couple of boyfriends but this is the first serious one for both of them and I think they both want to get it right erm he’s very keen to… obviously that it suits her, I said to her bare in mind if you’re having intercourse while you’re still taking this pill at an earlier stage you need to take other protection as well. And also I said, if you’re on the pill then just watch what you’re drinking now because if you have too much alcohol, you get sick, obviously that doesn’t have the effect that the pill should have because you’ve just thrown it all up so you’ve got to be very careful with that as well and um I’m pretty sure they’re not on drugs. I would know if (daughter) was but I know he used to smoke but he’s, he’s stopped now. He’s on e-cigarettes now so yeah it’s all going quite nicely for them bless them and err yeah like I say they’ve been very grown up about it to be honest.

Interviewer: Yeah, very responsible.

Participant: Yeah, very responsible about it yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. So can you talk to me a bit about how period pain impacts on (your daughter) and her life? Her day to day life?

Participant: Um, I think like I say she just gets on with it really. I think it’s because now all her friends are all on the pill or having regular periods. I think it’s different to when it first was because she was kind of gauging it by her other friends who were on and who hadn’t started yet and all that sort of thing. So when she came on when she was 13, one of her best friends still hadn’t started but you know it’s like oh she hasn’t started, I have. I said you started the same time as me cause I was 13 when I started um but I think I was a bit worried. I’m glad she started when she did. I’m glad it wasn’t 10 like you hear some girls at primary school because that is very difficult when you’re at primary school and you’ve got all that going on erm but she, she just takes it in her stride to be honest, it’s almost, she’s got a little container that she takes everything in that she needs. Um, and she just takes them with her every day just to be on the safe side.

Interviewer: That’s good. So you mentioned earlier she had a day off college… did she tell them what it was for or did she just say she wasn’t feeling well?

Participant: She made me phone up (laughs) like they do. She said oh can you phone them up I’m not feeling well so I did call the college and say it was tummy pains. I think, I did another time when she was at school when she had period pain and it was quite bad cause she was off school and what I did was I actually phoned the school and they obviously need a note when you’re at school and I put down because, I think they put two and two together when it’s a girl with tummy pains. I just put on there, sorry (daughter) is off school, she had um, bad stomach cramps so yeah.

Interviewer: OK, so they probably knew it was period related. And were they OK with that?

Participant: Yes, absolutely fine.

Interviewer: That’s good, and how about things like PE- did she engage in that when she was on?

Participant: Yeah um, there were a couple of times when yeah her friends had really bad pain and they were still making them do the cross country run (laughs). That doesn’t stop with age I’m afraid, I had that when I was 13/14 (laughs) and you know they kind of think oh gosh here we go. In my day, we actually had showers in the school, comprehensive school. We had to change our clothese and go in the showers. Somme girls in those days, we had a doctoral white sanitary towels and you actually had a belt with them. You had a belt that went from your tummy down and it had two, almost like wearing a suspender belt and the whats its name on it, you had a bit at the back and a bit at the front.

Interviewer: That must have been very uncomfortable!

Participant: Yeah, I mean imagine that, your little gym slip on and your blue knickers and many girls were very conscious of that because as I say some girls were still using the doctor white sanitary towel but then obviously tampons came in and that was that but anyway I digress (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs)

Participant: So I guess because she wasn't using tampons until probably a year after, she was just using ordinary panty liners and I think she found that very uncomfortable in both ways because she was more conscious of going around and doing PE and that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Did it impact on swimming or anything like that?

Participant: No, because if I knew she was going to go out and it was going to be a meet up with some friends, she might say oh well I won’t go because you know I might have my period and I would say well it’s up to you um, so sometimes that would have a bit of an impact.

Interviewer: And how about social life? You said sometimes she would be a bit ratty and a bit short, does that ever impact on friendships or anything like that?

Participant: Um, it did when they were younger, erm err when they were younger and all kind of starting their first periods it was kind of like ‘oh she’s not come on yet, oh she has’ and all this and that. But I think it was more when they were younger, they were more tetchy towards each other erm and it seems to have blossomed out now and I think because they’ve now moved on from school, they’re onto college and they’re more grown up about it. They all get on well with each other now.

Interviewer: Oh bless, and how about sleepovers?

Participant: Yes sometimes that would yes, even her close friends she would sometimes say oh actually I don't really want to go over because I know I’m gonna have the pain and I don’t want to go out.

Interviewer: Did she talk to her friends about that reason?

Participant: Yeah she did, I’m actually quite amazed that, what, when they meet up with boys and girls they do talk about it all quite openly. She’s just walked in now actually from the stables. Yeah so it was all quite open about it now.

Interviewer: Does she talk to her dad about it as well?

Participant: Yeah she does actually, she talks to her dad about it. Probably a little bit more with me because she spends more time with me than she does over at her dads so yes a little bit more with me. And also being female she feels she can ask me questions and you know, I’ve been there and done it type of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, and do you think it ever impact on her self esteem at all? How she feels about her self

Participant: Yeah it has, it did, not that she really mentioned that to me but I guess it must of on quite a few occasions.

Interviewer: How does it make you feel, if she can’t go to a sleepover or she misses school- how does that make you feel?

Participant: Well I mean like I say, it’s all part and parcel of being female. I just do the best I can and make her feel, try and you know just put her at ease really and get some pain relief down her or anything. Like I said earlier I don't want her to take too many pain relief pills because you just on’t know, they might say years down the line, the young girls who used to take all the nurofen there’s something else wrong with that. Um, I’m there for her and she knows that um but obviously like I said before I’m having a tough time with the menopause so I can be a bit ratty as well… I don’t have periods anymore but I know I’ve been a bit ratty to her and a bit short um so yeah it’s kind of had a knock on effect onto how I am with her.

Interviewer: How does that affect your family life?

Participant: Oh (laughs) it’s kind of stop the world and want to get off type of thing really (laughs). Also, where I’m working in a school, it’s a hot school and I’m having a hot flush it’s, so I do the best I could for myself and erm read a book about it and um all about taking more, we all have a healthy life and fruit and veg and all that sort of thing, erm I certainly do and the kids do, well they try to. I do a lot of home cooking here as well but um, what was I gonna say? There we go, yes… so yeah, if I’ve had a bad day at work then I tend to sort of clam up a bit and with (daughter) she says ‘you alright mum?’ and sometimes it’s just like don’t ask me, I just don’t wanna know. And it’s different when my husband was here because I could say a bit to him about it but now I haven’t got another… in a way I have got two other adults, young adults in the house but you know I’m the mum. I don’t expect them to hear about all my woes but I try and be as positive to them and err hopefully all jiggle along as best I can really

Interviewer: That sounds difficult

Participant: It is, it is difficult sometimes. The menopause is a physical and a mental, exhausting thing to go through. I’m thinking that I need to be looking after myself as well as looking after (my children) because I’m the breadwinner sort of thing so that’s why I started up with the um, doing the walking and swimming and that sort of thing and I might actually put my name down for keep fit again because I’ve got to look after myself because my mum, she’s got osteoporosis now. My sister, she’s 18 months older than me, she’s had really bad health problems and they think it’s all connected with bone density, she’s got curvature of the spine. She’s had to give up her work with children as well. And err that’s had a massive affect on her. She’s now got back problems. So I’m very conscious with my mum and sister having those things, happen to them I don’t want it to happen to me so I’ve, I’m hoping that I’ve done my homework getting myself on the nuts and the seeds and the um, the linseed oil and all that.. and taking the soya milk and all these things.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Mhmm, Going back to (daughter), does it ever impact on what you do as a family?

Participant: Oh yes, yeah I mean there would be days when we’d have to change some of our plans but it doesn’t happen that often. There’s no point draggin her around if she’s looking very pale and looking like death warmed up. It’s just a waste of time. Waste of money (laughs) you know, so it’s just, it wouldn’t be fair on her either.

Interviewer: And how about things like birthdays and Christmases- has it every impacted on something like that?

Participants: Well, I think she just takes it in her stride really. I know she kind of puts a brave face on. You know when she’s really going through a rough time with the period pain erm err, like I say, things have changed a little bit more now. If it’s weekend and she’s out and about she’s seeing (her boyfriend) so the logistics have changed with who she sees at the weekends now, it’s not so much with her friends. She sees them more at college but now it’s with (her boyfriend) and his friends.

Interviewer: OK so, I think that’s everything. Is there anything that I haven’t asked that we haven’t covered?

Participant: No