Mother 12

14 years daughter

Interviewer: OK, could you just start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: I am a mum of 5, I have 3 daughters and 2 sons. Erm myself I started my periods at an early age, the age of 11 and my 3 daughters started at erm, 11, second one 11 and a half, and the last one 12. So they vary in ages, yes they’ve all suffered, I used to suffer badly and I’ve sort of gone back to how I used to be when I was younger. I’m suffering like I used to when I was younger but I think I’m heading towards my change. What else do you want to know?

Interviewer: How old are your children?

Participant: My (oldest) is 24, (name)’s 18, (name)’s 17, (name) will be 15 in August, and (youngest) will be 13 in October

Interviewer: So, what type of things do you do in your spare time, what hobbies do you have?

Participant: Um, nothing really exciting, I walk the dogs, I go round and see my mum quite regularly as she only lives 5 minutes up the road. I do a lot with my kids, I love being round my kids. And I like being around my friends, I’ve got a good base of friends, family. I think at my age now, I can look back and I’ve got friends from school, (name) I’ve known from school, and friends I’ve found along the way. I’m quite at peace with how I am at the moment. My husband’s got MS so it restricts us a bit in what we do yeah, but other than that we’re quite happy- a house full of madness but we’re happy.

Interviewer: Do all your children live at home at the moment?

Participant: Yes, yes. Very busy house, very over crowded. We are waiting to be moved at the moment into a bigger property. But it’s a happy home, on the whole it’s a happy home. Apart from when my daughter’s menstrual (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs) fair enough. So is it OK if we talk about (daughter’s) periods?

Participant: You can, that’s fine

Interviewer: So erm, can you start telling me about when your youngest daughter, when her periods started and like when the pain… when it started?

Participant: She started her periods I’d say probably halfway through year 7 so she was what about 11 and a half. No actually, she was 11 because her birthday’s one of the latest ones in the year so she was 11 when she started her period. For the first few months it was there but nothing major. Erm could cope with it, ‘yeah I’m doing this mum, it’s fine’. I spose she was about 6 and a half months into it, then she started getting heavier. In the morning she’d find that her bed was soiled you know and things started to get… she didn’t let it affect her day to day life but it, you could see it was slowly becoming ‘mum, I’m sort of like for the first couple of days really heavy’. She can’t use internal so she uses towel. She’s paranoid about leakage bless her. She’s tried using internal, she can’t. She’s just one of those children I think she can’t get her head around em so we’ve backed off. We’ve tried all sorts of sanitary wear. She’d been having these for about a year and a half and then me and my husband said enough she can’t cope at the moment. She gets migraines as well so the migraines were going hand in hand, the heavier her periods got, she started increasing and getting the migraines so she was having a couple of days off school. She’d come home and she’d go to me mum, I’ve leaked, the paranoia sets in so we took her down the doctors and the doctors sort of assessed. She spoke to the nurse and the nurse said I think she’s a good candidate for going on the pill. What it was, I though, being a bit daft, I thought it was like mine that you’d take, you’d be off for a week and then you’d have your period and it wouldn’t be quite so heavy then you’d go back again. But hers it’s literally taking it all the time. It stopped her period. If she stops taking it, literally within that first day of stopping taking it she has a period, it’s quite heavy and uncomfortable. She’s described it as dragging, someone dragging on the inside of her down. Erm yeah it really does effect her day to day life erm. This has been marvellous, and it’s nice because her older sisters have had the same problem. Although the older one’s been on the pill on and off and the other one’s not so they can both sympathise. If she can’t talk to me she goes and talks to them which is nice. On the while, we try to keep it… I say to her it’s one of those things babe, you’re gonna have it until your possibly in your late 50’s, you gotta get on with it you know. I’m hoping hers will calm down like mine did but I don't know, I really don’t know. She does cope, she does get on with it now.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, how does she react when you say to her she might have this until her 50’s?

Participant: Well, I think it is a case of, I’m quite open- I’ll talk about anything from childbirth, sex, you know I’ll talk, it’s day to day life, I think I said, it came about because I started getting really bad migraines, my periods were reverting back to being like her and we was talking about and I think it was probably, bearing in mind she’s coming up to 15. So I started getting the signs of my change about the time she started her periods and when they started getting heavy I said to her one day I said ‘darling without being rude’ it was when I was washing her underwear out, I said to her ‘sweetheart I get the same as you and I used to be like you when I was younger’ but she said they weren't and I said no they’d have changed back and I’m starting to go through the change where my body is slowly shutting down on the period side and she said to me ‘how old will I be’ so I said it varies sweetheart, my mum was in her mid-forties, my aunt was in her 60’s, I said it sort of varies between that time. You can’t tell. And she was like ‘oh ok, that’s fine’. I think now she’s found that you can get things to help. I don’t think she’s opposed to the fact that, oh I don’t want period. I think she doesn't like the pain and the heaviness and that what comes with it. I think if she could have a normal couple of days and then petering out it’d be fine but I think now she’s got it under control she’s not, not fazed by it in the slightest. I’ve gotta be honest, I’d rather her have a week off (the pill), 3 weeks on, one week off because I think you’re having a period for a reason. What happens to what doesn’t come out? Do you see what I mean? I’m a little bit worried about that. Um, and I think coming up to 15, 16 I will be talking to the doctor and I will be saying to him can you suggest something else because I think a lady has a period for a reason. Your body’s got to disperse that somewhere so… what happens? I’m a little bit concerned. It helps her and frightens her if I suggest oh no, I’m waiting till she gets perhaps that little bit older to understand what I’m saying to you. Where does it go? You know.

Interviewer: So at the moment she doesn’t agree?

Participant: No, at the moment she is ‘mum it helps’. I think if I go down and have that chat with her and the nurse I think then, if the nurse can explain to me that how she’s taking it is fine and it’s not going to have any long-term effects then I might be a little bit more. Although they explained it all when it first started, I was still convinced that at some point throughout the month she did have a show at some sort. I’m not keen but as I say, she’s happy and she’s going through the last year of school next year so I can’t rock the boat too much cause it could disturb her exams and what have you.

Interviewer: OK, so can you tell me… you talked about migraines and mood swings. Can you tell me about other symptoms that come as well as the pain?

Participant: Um, as you said it’s like heaviness of the stomach, her legs hurt. Um, she’s lethargic. Very moody. Get’s very, very moody um, tearful. She does get tearful. If you disagree with something she’ll either throw a strop or burst into tears. Yeah, I think it’s pretty much along those lines. Nothing sort of major. It’s something I look at and think well, every woman goes through it you know, but it sort of varies in you know. Like I said my eldest daughters have had bad periods and cried and what have you. It’s sort of, a bit of the general what have you so yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK. So, before she was put on the pill, what type of things did she do to relieve the pain?

Participant: Wheaty bag, hot water bottle, paracetamol or ibuprofen, whichever one of those she found worked. Um, trying to find different positions to lay in bed to go to sleep. Erm keeping herself active I think. Trying to keep herself mobile to take her mind off of, but like I said sometimes you can’t. But erm pretty much the usual things I think that people would do but yeah that was the last resort.

Interviewer: So did you go with her to the doctors?

Participant: Yeah, my husband and I went with her yeah

Interviewer: OK, and when the doctor suggested the pill, how did she feel about that? And how did you feel about that as well?

Participant: She was alright, I think she just wanted a means to an end and that was it. I was, as I said, I was a little bit… don't get me wrong, with the pill, it helps the period pains. This is one of the reasons when I was younger that I went on it but also with the pill, you advertise it too much comes the little bit of a stigma that goes with it. Erm and I was a little bit po-faced about it. A little bit ‘don’t make it too obvious to people’ that you’re on the pill because… “well I’m only taking it for my periods mum”, she’s got the right attitude. I was the one who was a little bit please don’t advertise the fact that you take it because it could be said innocently to one girl, she could have a conversation with someone else, and it could go round that you’re a little bit of an easy…that’s my, perhaps I was a bit of a prude but that’s my thing. And I think my husband felt a little bit that was as well although he said brilliant within two months, you could see a change in her, completely brilliant. Oh the other thing was her hair, and greasy face and greasy hair do you know what I mean? All that changed and you could see the change there but um I was a little bit like, is there nothing else you could suggest but you know. So yeah that’s been a help.

Interviewer: OK, so do you feel differently about it now?

Participant: Yes, because the people she has told understand and funny enough asked her advice on whether, and she spoke to the mums about it. Her best friend, she spoke to her best friend’s mum because she’s suffering now and she spoke to her about it and said mum and dad took me down you know and the fact she took her dad into the doctor to talk about her periods speaks volumes you know. Yeah, she’s quite level headed about it and she shares her experiences with her friends. Those who know, knows why she takes it, for no other reason.

Interviewer: Yeah, I understand. So can you tell me, we talked about the other things as well like the hot water bottles and things like that, were any of those particularly effective? Any of those seem to help?

Participant: A bit but when you think of on the scale of how long a water bottle stays warm, yeah it’s sort of initial for the first 5 minutes or so but then it’s ‘mum can we do something else, mum I’m really’ and you feel rotten because you can’t do anything. She’d have to pillows, she’s come downstairs and take a tablet. But I found the weatie bag probably stayed a bit warmer a bit longer. Erm, obviously day to day while she’s at school you can’t do none of that, just give her a couple of tablets to take into school and say if you need them take them at whatever time but yeah, initial effective but not a long term help. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK so we’ve talked a bit about school, erm you said she had to take some time off school? Can you tell me more about that?

Participant: She’s asked a couple of times but if she’s been up quite a bit in the night and usually hand in hand goges with it the migraine so there’s no way- I suffer from migraines and there’s no way that she could go into school with a migraine. Luckily, it’s never been more than a day and it’s only sort of sporadic, it’s not every month you know so it doesn’t affect her schoolwork but if I haven’t suggested it, she can sometimes come down in the morning and is, and I go to her, are you feeling alright, do you wanna go… sometimes she’s gone in a little bit later, say break or whatever. Yeah it’s not overly effected school but it hass sort of encroached a little bit.

Interviewer: So, if she goes into school, goes in a little bit late or whatever, does it affect how her day goes?

Participant: Erm no, I think she’s quite level headed, she just goes in and says I got it out the way now and I’ve gotta. She’s always got that thought in her mind of ‘I now got to catch up’ you know and she doesn’t go in between lessons she’ll go in on a lesson so she’s not half way through or whatever you know and although I’ve not said… Ive said to the school that she does suffer really badly and with that goes the migraines and that is the reason why she has because I do think sometimes they possibly look and think why is she having a day off for a period so the times when she does I say she’s coming in, she’s had a migraine throughout the night, she’s in at break, she’s quite open with them but she goes in and gets on with her day.

Interviewer: How are the school when you talk to them?

Participant: They’re helpful, they are good. Like I say it’s not encroached too much so it’s not become an issue where it’s every month oh here we go again she’s taking two or 3 days off, it’s one day here and there so it’s not affecting. And her school grades are showing that she’s there are she;s working hard.

Interviewer: And how about things like PE?

Participant: Depending on how heavy she is. Again it’s because she can only wear towels, she’s frightened of leakage but the majority of the time she goes in and does her PE but usually it’s not her period that stops her doing PE it’s her knee so that usually stops her.

Interviewer: And how about her friends and going out…

Participant: She just goes out because all her friends have their periods now so they understand. It’s quite amusing you can pretty much tell who’s got their period at what stage with the atmosphere around them.

Interviewer: OK, so she sounds quite open with you and your husband and her sisters. Does she talk to her brothers?

Participant: Well her brothers know, we’re very open. I’m not being funny and there’s nothing crass in this but we’ve got a bathroom and a toilet that’s in one so if one of em needs a toilet while we’re in the bath, shower, whatever, just come in and we’re that sort of open family. They are understanding, they are pretty good.

Interviewer: And how about sleepovers and stuff?

Participant: She’s got her group of friends and her best friend and her best friend’s mum’s friends with me so she’s got that, well I can go and talk to (friends mum) so she’s quite confident.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about how it affects your life? You mentioned it effects her sleep? What would happen if she woke up?

Participant: I’d be up with her but if, she’s pretty good. Sometimes she’ll get up in the morning and go to me ‘mum I’ve been up half the night’ and I then tell her off… why didn’t you come and get me? “You were sound asleep I couldn't wake you up”- you should have woke me up if you really don’t feel well. But the thing is, what can you do mum? She says apart from be there and give me a hug, what can you do and I know you understand how I feel but you can’t do anything so you know, she’s quite mature about it.

Interviewer: How does it effect your day when you’ve been up?

Participant: It doesn’t affect me sleep wise, because I’ve got 5 children you know, for 5 years I was pretty much up and down what have you so no it doesn’t. I think I’m a typical mum. There’s part of you that when you become a mum you expect that disturbed night and if it’s not her periods its (her brothers) asthma and I’m not being funny I’ve layed on the floor in his bedroom and I’ve layed most of the night listening to him rattling and what have you. It’s that mothers instinct where I surpose somewhere down the line if I’ve had a bad week, at the end of the week it’ll catch up with me but temperament wise, my kids come first a foremost so I can’t moan because when my children are sick they're sick, other than that- they’re not ones that pretend. We all pretty much rally round and get on with it.

Interviewer: And how about family events so say it was Christmas or birthday or something like that and she had a lot of pain, would that impact on something that was planned?

Participant: If she was really rough and had a migraine then I would either stay with her or my husband would and the rest of them would take the rest of them out.

Interviewer: How do you work out which one stays?

Participant: I’ve got to be honest, depending on how she is. If she’s really not well then that’ll be me that stays. If she’s just got up, then gone back to bed I’m quite happy for my husband to stay. That’s just a mother thing I think, I’m not saying my husband’s incapeable but that’s just you know, just me. I’m like that with all my children, even my 24 year old. That’s me, I’m there.

Interviewer: Yeah, have you ever had to get her from school?

Participant: A couple of times, just a couple of times and that was before she started taking the pill. I think the first time she went down (to school nurse) she was fine, the second time. All my periods and my girls I put them on the calendar. I always mark an initial on the calendar and then I’ve got an idea. And they’ve all got roughly a 28 day cycle and they all come on either 3 days before or 3 days after me. They’re all around my cycle. Once she’s been caught out and she’s been in a bit of a mess and gone to the toilet and used paper towels and what have you and she’s embarrassed and she’s gone to the office and the office has actually said to me ‘ well she could have asked for sanitary wear so that thing and I just looked at the lady behind the desk and I went to her I’m not being rude but would the sanitary wear have included new underwear, new tights, a shower- can you provide that? And she said point taken. I said I’m not being horrible, you wouldn’t want to walk about like that all day. She’s not going to want to. And she said I understand that and it was after dinner so she hadn’t missed a lot of, but she said mum I could feel it in the lesson and she said sir I’ve got to get up and she said it was literally, I couldn’t do anything about it so yeah on the whole, they are quite understanding but I suppose when you’ve got a school full of hundreds of children and you possibly have a child there that’s down there every month complaining I think probably would think along the same lines as I would that surely your parents would have done something to help out you know. On the whole it doesn’t affect it.

Interviewer: So can you tell me about, when she leaked at school, when she came home was she embarrassed or?

Participant: No, it’s us. She’s not bothered by it she just goes where do you want my undies… it’s that sort of thing. She’s never had it where it’s come through her outer clothing. I think it would be a completely different story if it comes through but touch wood up to now, but no it’s been fine.

Interviewer: You talked about your experiences as a girl, how have you used what you’ve been through to help her?

Participant: Yeah because I suffered horrendously, to the extent where I used to sit in a lesson and the teacher would watch the colour drain out of me and I’d get sent home. I wouldn’t ask to go home, I’d get sent home. I started my periods just as I started year 7. I was heavy from the offset. I’ve taken that upon myself to think I can’t moan at her, I understand what she’s going through. I am sympathetic, I will admit sometimes I say to her come on, it’s a period get on with it. You’ve got a lot more trying things in the years to come, come on it’s fine. I am sympathetic to a point but not to the extent where you make them feel… because it’s not an illness. It’s something she could have till the age of 60.

Interviewer: Has it helped that you have two older daughters as well?

Participant: Yeah, sometimes when she gets up in the night, the girls laugh and joke with her and it helps. We’ve all got good underwear and bad underwear and (youngest daughter) will say oh I’ve got to wear and (older daughter) will say well you don’t want to muck up good ones and getting her head round wearing the more secure knickers when she’s in bed. It’s things like that and they’ve all rallied round.

Interviewer: That’s good. Can you tell me more about her moods, does the pain affect her mood?

Participant: I think it’s more hormonal thing cause when she’s in pain it tends to be tearful or she goes off and takes whatever pain relief that’s there. She’s like me, if I’m ill leave me alone. I’ll go and go have you got everything you want? Water there, curtains are shut, have you changed your towel before you lay down then just come out and leave her. I would say now when I’m watching her throughout the month, I’d probably say now is probably the time that she was going to have her period would be now judging by when I have finished, which is probably why I got a major strop yesterday.

Interviewer: And how does that impact on family life?

Participant: Well as you can imagine, there are 4 of us. It’s a little bit difficult. And the other part of that, from my perspective, I can feel it. I can feel and know what I’m doing but I’ve already said it. I’ve already shouted or slammed the door and you think hmm and I think she’s pretty much the same.

Interviewer: And how about the men of the house, are they understanding?

Participant: They just get out the way (laughs). We’re not horrible, just a bit snappy. We don’t come out with any horrible nasty things but they can be tense. Very firey.

Interviewer: OK, anything else you’d like to talk about- anything that I haven’t asked?

Participant: No