Mother 14 (36 years)

13 years daughter

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

Participant: Erm I’m a mother of 3 children and 2 step-children, 3 boys and 2 girls. Um, full time work I’m a full time customer service advisor for the local council and…. Probably about it, I like playing netball.

Interviewer: That’s nice, is that what you do in your spare time then?

Participant: Yeah, and run around after the kids (laughs)

Interviewer: How old are your kids?

Participant: Erm the oldest is 20, he’s at (location) university and we’ve got a daughter who’s 13 erm and my son who is 12 and a step son who is 13 and a step- daughter who is 9, almost 10.

Interviewer: You’re a busy woman then (laughs) so who’s at home?

Participant: Erm the 13 year old and the 12 year old.

Interviewer: OK, erm, can you tell me a little bit about your daughter’s periods, when they started and just sort of go from there?

Participant: Unfortunately they started when she was 11. I was hoping they were gonna be later because she’s a dancer. So I thought it might have slowed the process but I was wrong. She was completely unprepared even though we spoke about it because she said it never ever was gonna happen to her. And absolutely hated every minute of it and nobody’s allowed to know (laughs) still

Interviewer: Oh bless her, so when she did start how did she tell you?

Participant: Um, it was just spotting to start with so she just came home from school and went ‘it’s so not fair, I‘ve started my period’ but then she didn’t have one for months and months so that was really good.

Interviewer: Obviously, she was quite young, she was in primary school, was she in primary school?

Participant: She was in a middle school so it was slightly easier.

Interviewer: Did they talk to her about periods and things at the school?

Participant: Yeah, they’d had the talk and they did actually have sanitary bins and things in the school which made it a lot easier because some primary school don’t.

Interviewer: And um, you said she didn't have a period for months and months, when she did have them again, were they regular?

Participant: No and they’re still not. They’re very frequent at the minute like kind of two weeks at the moment.

Interviewer: Oh bless her. And does she tell you every time?

Participant: No, no she just might say- normally I can tell because there’s sanitary towel in the bin er and she’ll say ‘I’ve got no pads left and that’s kind of it.

Interviewer: OK, and does she have any other symptoms with them at all like tummy cramps?

Participant: Yeah, she’s really quite lethargic the day before and really bad tempered. Really bad and the skin, she’s got spots anyway but you can always tell because it will flare up.

Interviewer: OK, and are those symptoms with every period or every few?

Participant: It’s with every few, it’s not been so bad because it’s been every two weekly but when it was… so then I think it’ll be worse when she regulates.

Interviewer: OK, and what type of things does she do to help her feel better? Like hot water bottles or anything

Participant: Well she occasionally has a hot water bottle and paracetamol erm to be honest, I wouldn’t say it affects her that much. She tried to get a day off school erm but that’s about it. It doesn’t happen so (laughs)

Interviewer: OK so how does she try and get a day off school does she ask you?

Participant: Oh it’s just so bad and it hurts everywhere, just the general sort of symptoms and it’s just like well you got it for the rest of your life so tough. Got it for a long time yet anyway.

Interviewer: How often does she try and get time off school?

Participant: Erm not every time but I’d say every couple of months.

Interviewer: OK and when you say no, you can’t stay off school today, does that impact on your relationship with her?

Participant: Not really cause I think she knows she wasn’t gonna get a day off anyway. She just sort of tries her luck. We do kind of argue a lot more because she’s so hormonal and she takes everything completely the wrong way and normally she’s like dead easy going and no bother but yeah those times of the month she’s horrendous. We all know, even though she thinks nobody knows, the whole house knows.

Interviewer: And how does that effect her relationships with her brothers and sisters then?

Participant: Well the eldest doesn't live at home so it doesn’t really, and he wouldn’t contemplate that anyway cause she’s still a little girl to him so but her brother would just do what he’s normally do and go ‘what’s wrong with you, time of the month?’ and then she’s like ‘no!’

Interviewer: Oh bless her. You said she doesn’t really want to talk about it, does she talk about it with her girlfriends?

Participant: I know, because she didn’t even tell them initially. I think she does now because she changed school in September, she started at high school so I think it’s more approachable now.

Interviewer: OK, and does she still do normal day to day things like go out with her friends if she was going to go and see them?

Participant: Yeah she still does, I mean she does a lot of dancing and it never stops her going to dance. But then sometimes she’ll say ‘oh I’ve got pain it really hurts’ and I’m like you’d be better off exercising and she does say it makes her feel better when she’s exercised so.

Interviewer: That’s good. And how about things around the house like does it affect whether she’ll help out or…

Participant: Well she wouldn’t help out anyway so (laughs) she’ll do her chores that she’s got but that’s it.

Interviewer: OK, and erm how about, you mentioned sometimes she doesn’t really want to go to school, when she does does she do anything at school to help herself out like take paracetamol

Participant: Yeah she would take paracetamol.

Interviewer: Does that help?

Participant: Yeah it seems to, like I said I don’t think it’s really chronic chronic with her so.

Interviewer: OK so it doesn’t affect her concentration or anything like that?

Participant: It doesn’t affect her concentration or her everyday life really.

Interviewer: OK and how about thigns like swimming

Participant: She wouldn’t contemplate that because she wouldn’t use a tampon. There’s no way anything alien is going into her body as she puts it (laughs) so she will miss out on swimming or anything. I mean she went on holiday erm with her dad who she doesn’t want to know anything about it and wouldn't go in the pool or anything.

Interviewer: How did she talk to him about that

Participant: She just said I’m not going in, I don't want to and like he knows so he just kind of realised and then didn’t push her.

Interviewer: But she didn’t want to talk about it?

Participant: (laughs) no

Interviewer: (laughs) has she ever been to the doctors about anything period related?

Participant: Well she was just there the other week actually but it was more because she’s got a bit of acne, it’s not horrendous, it’s moderate but she thinks it’s absolutely horrendous erm and when I was there I did mention how irregular and frequent her periods were so they have kind of discussed erm a pill, which isn’t a contraceptive one, it’s another one. We’re gonna sort of see how she goes first.

Interviewer: OK, so when they first suggested that at the doctors, were you OK about that?

Participant: I went with her yeah, well I bought it up cause I mean she wouldn’t mention it (laughs) and I don’t know, I’m not really happy about her having a hormone so young erm and I obviously did raise my concern with the GP but they said it’s absolutely nothing to worry about but I then said well we’ll wait and see if the spot tablets work. They said she'll regulate like everybody else has done over time so…

Interviewer: OK, so how was she about that?

Participant: She was fine she kind of went along with what I said. She didn’t even have a go at me for mentioning it actually which was good, that was quite a surprise cause I was expecting her to not be happy er but she was alright.

Interviewer: OK, that’s good. So you mentioned about her skin. Does that affect her self-esteem at all?

Participant: Yes it does because obviously her spots are a lot worse and redder and angrier so then half of boots has to go on her face before she can go to school.

Interviewer: Um, so does she talk to her sister about it at all?

Participant: She’s spoke to her little sister, she’s spoken to her. I’ve spoken to her because I know her mum hasn’t. She’s a big, kind of mature 9 year old and I don’t think it’s going to be very long so she spoke to her as well so… I still don’t think she told her that she’s actually started her periods, I don’t know (laughs)

Interviewer: You mentioned that early on, she thought oh it won’t happen to me and she had the talks at school and things, did you talk to her about not just the bleeding but the skin and the…

Participant: Yeah the whole works and everything that could happen, you know you can get cramps, exercise is good for you, hot water bottels, you might not be regular straight away and you don’t know how long your periods are gonna go on for, you might have a late menopause, an early menopause, you don’t know.

Interviewer: Are there any other hobbies or sports that she might not do because of it?

Participant: No, it would just be swimming. She’s very sporty, she wouldn’t let it get in the way with doing any sports.

Interviewer: Erm you mentioned about the moodiness and all the hormones and things like that. Does that ever effect her friendships?

Participant: Not that I’m aware of, I wouldn’t have thought so, I think it’s the nearest and dearest she kind of takes it out on. I think she’s still her normal self when she’s at school.

Interviewer: OK. So how does she cope in herself when she’s feeling tired and she might have some cramps.

Participant: She generally just takes herself up to bed and you know that she wants to be on her own so we just kind of let her get on with it, take up a cup of tea or something and make her feel loved (laughs)

Interviewer: That’s nice. Erm so when that sort of thing is happening, does it affect how you feel? Do you feel more stressed you know, when she takes herself off…

Participant: Oh well I can kind of relate to how she’s feeling so I think you know ah she just needs cheering up and a bit of a cuddle so I suppose I am more lenient with her around that sort of time.

Interviewer: And how about her dad and step-dad?

Participant: So erm her step-dad kind of just buries his head in the sand erm, she’s still his little girl but he is kind of aware of it so he might you know take her a cup of tea or a bar of chocolate (laughs).

Interviewer: Um, fixes everything (laughs). So if she’s on her period around birthday or Christmas or anything like that, does it affect what you do or how you would enjoy it?

Participant: No, no it doesn’t have an impact on anything she does apart from the swimming.

Interviewer: OK, that’s good. Um, yeah and so- Oh I forgot to ask you- how old are you?

Participant: I’m 36

Interviewer: 36. So is there anything else that we haven’t talked about that you feel you would like to mention about her periods or any of her symptoms?

Participant: Don’t think so. I think it’s a lot better than, I mean I was only 8 when I started my period so it’s a lot… I was worried she was gonna be as early so 11 was early enough erm. But I think it’s more understood at schools and things now as well so I mean there were no sanitary bins and things when I was young and I didn’t want anyone to know and I was kind of private and awkward and erm, I suppose she’s like me like that but she will kind of speak to me if she has to about it. But she’s not worried about it or anything so.

Interviewer: OK, so it’s just

Participant: Yeah I think I’ve always because I was such an early developer, I’ve spoken to her about it from quite a young age and even though she said ‘it’s never happening to me’ (laughs) like she’s never gonna have children (laughs) and, and it’s disgusting (laughs) and I just say you keep that head on that’s fine erm (laughs) um but I think because I’ve always been quite open about it she hasn’t really ever had anything to worry about. She came straight home and told me, she didn’t sit and worry about it and I know there is kids that do that and it’s sad you know when they don’t tell mum straight away… or dad. Yeah, I think it’s easier to tell a mum than a dad like.

Interviewer: Would she talk to her dad if she had to?

Participant: I think there’s more chance of her talking to her step-dad.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK. Erm, yeah is there anything else that you would like to talk about today?

Participant: No, I don’t think so.