Participant 1

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Dysmenorrheic girl (17 years old)

Interviewer: OK (name), if it’s OK, could you start off by telling me about yourself?

Participant: So I, I’m 17, I’m currently in sixth form- year 13. I’m taking English Literature, History, Psychology erm and Sociology err I, I’m pretty normal (laughs). I do everyday things.

Interviewer: Mhmm, how about anything like extracurricular activities?

Participant: Not since I was a lot younger if I’m honest. I do a few things for charity like we did um, a santa walk last year at work, at school we do a lot of charity things like I think we’re gonna do a Christmas jumper day on the 13th I think which is like a national thing for um children in need or something like that.

Interviewer: Mhmm

Participant: So yeah…

Interviewer: That sounds good, how about any hobbies or anything like that?

Participant: Errm I like reading and writing (laughs) probably coming from school umm, I do special effects makeup as well in my own time erm just casual stuff like listening to music, watching films and things like that.

Interviewer: OK, would it be OK now if I ask you about the period pain that you experience?

Participant: Mhmm

Interviewer: OK so can you tell me a bit about that?

Participant: Yep, erm I started when I was in my first year of high school…

Interviewer: Mhmm

Participant: And straight away they were massively irregular which of course we thought was normal because they are irregular when you start off a lot of the time

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: But the pain gradually became so intense that I’d be stuck in a position, I often wouldn’t be able to move, I’d try and find a place of comfort and stay there. I had a lot of time off school, my attendance wasn’t great because when you’re in quite a lot of pain you can’t really focus and so I’d have a lot of time off.

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: Erm, we went to the doctor and tried to get various medications, none of which seemed to even touch upon it so we just tried everything we could erm…

Interviewer: When did you first go to the doctor?

Participant: Err about a year after I think, we thought they’d kind of sort themselves out because you know, hormones are all over the place and we thought it’s just normal but after a while the attendance becomes a bit too much and missing too much and obviously you get fed up with the pain and so we went to the doctor after about a year or so for the pain to try and get it sorted.

Interviewer: And what happened when you first went to the doctors?

Participant: Just lots and lots of medications, lots of tablets- I’m not sure of the names but they were generally just strong erm yeah none of them seemed to sort it out so we had to have further investigations I had an ultrasound to see if, they thought there might be cysts or something on my ovaries that might have worsened it, my periods are very heavy as well so not to be gruesome but I was changing my towels about 10, 11, 12 times a day which obviously is not normal and they were on the very thick pads as well

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: So that’s also supposed to thin them down but they didn’t at all so in the end I was put onto the contraceptive pill as a last resort (laughs) and that actually seemed to sort it out, you know I barely felt any pain any more- that was only recently about 2 years ago

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: And since then they’ve been pretty controlled err I haven’t had a lot of pain they’re very light, I barely notice them now and it’s brilliant what a change that can make.

Interviewer: That’s good, so have you been consistently on the same pill or have you changed….

Participant: Erm, I changed from the microgyenon to the cerezet erm about 8 or 9 months ago because erm I have a history of migraines and we found out that there’s a higher risk of strokes and blood clots I think whilst your on that pill if you have a history of migraines or currently have migraines so I was changed over to the cerezet and I’ve been on it ever since.

Interviewer: OK. Do you, are there any other treatments you use, any other things you do to relieve, or have done to relieve the pain?

Participant: Err not necessarily treatments, just normal painkillers if I do get a little bit of pain because now that the pain is reduced, painkillers do seem to sort that out.

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: And obviously just like a hot water bottle down there to try and relieve it or we, we tried little home remedies that we heard about like, something like apples- obviously didn’t relieve it and their probably only old wives tales but we thought we would try our best. Oh we heard about heating a cabbage leaf and pressing it to the area was supposed to help.

Interviewer: Did any of those things help?

Participant: Not particularly (laughs)

Interviewer: OK, who did you hear them from- the ideas?

Participant: I’m not too sure, mum came home sometimes, probably from friends who may have had either the same experiences in themselves or their children maybe.

Interviewer: Yeah so they've passed that on to your mum and she’s passed it onto you…

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how about the hot water bottle, did that work?

Participant: For a little while I mean you could still feel pain but whether it’s just in the head like, kind of like a placebo, or maybe it did actually help, it did relieve some of the pain.

Interviewer: And how about since you’ve started the pill, how has the pain been? You said it’s been a lot less but…

Participant: Brilliant in comparison to how it used to be. Sometimes I don’t get any pain at all on the odd few months. Err and it’s very light so I barely notice it now. Sometimes like a few weeks ago, my doctor told me I was supposed to come off of the cerezet, that was a mistake but em I tried it anyway and straight away without the tablet I came on my period and that pain coming back to my body was such a shock that it actually sent me into a panic attack cause I was in the middle of a class and so I realised that even if there was a risk of something being slightly higher, like.5%- I’d rather have continued to take that rather than miss school for a thing that I thought I’d resolved.

Interviewer: Yeah so erm, can you tell me about that day when you had the panic attack? So what happened after, did you coming home or….

Participant: Yeah I, it was a bit silly I asked my teacher to be excused, I told her I felt a bit sick cause I didn’t want to have to explain what it was and I ended up in the bathroom sitting on the floor erm trying to find a comfortable position but I couldn’t really and I tried to calm myself down because I have had panic attacks in the past so I tried to you know bring myself out of it and I phoned my mum and she came to pick me up, I mean she wasn’t very pleased cause she thought it was my own fault for coming off of the pill but at first I was kind of worried about the risks to my health but after I realised I’d rather have stayed on the pill.

Interviewer: So what have you done since then?

Participant: Continuously taken it and they’ve been fine touch wood.

Interviewer: Yeah that’s good. Erm, could you tell me about the regularity of the pain and how that might have changed cause you mentioned that now some months you don’t get pain but was that different from the start?

Participant: At the start the pain would be constant throughout the week as well, it didn’t seem to faded off towards the end of the week. It would be constant 7 days of bleeding, 7 days of pain but now you know the bleeding might fade off within the week and the pain.

Interviewer: So how about the timeline of the pain? Did it start before the periods? So, on what day would it generally start and what day did it finish?

Participant: Um, I’d get a little bit of pain before the period- that would tell me that I was going to come on and so I’d prepare myself and then it would last a little bit after the bleeding had stopped as well but not, not for days just a few hours or so.

Interviewer: OK, and can, can you describe that pain for me?

Participant: Oooo it (laughs) I know it sounds completely strange but when I first started to experience it I felt that I wanted to sit on the toilet, that made me feel comfortable- I have no idea why but erm it was intense and it was constant, it didn't fluctuate, not even with pain relief at first and I felt like I needed to curl up into a ball even though you’re supposed to relax and not be tense cause that seems to make it worse. Erm yeah you know, obviously I was quite young, I’ve got a better pain resistance now but when I was younger you know I’d be in tears and panicking, you know I couldn’t cope very well with it, at all.

Interviewer: OK, can you tell me about other symptoms? Do you have any other symptoms?

Participant: Err, my hormones would be terrible but I figure that’s normal and sometimes I’d get the odd headache and I don’t know whether that’s linked- could be of course but it was mainly just the pain and not much else came with it.

Interviewer: OK, and were there any symptoms that came off of the pain? As in were there any symptoms which were the result of the pain?

Participant: Not particularly, sometimes I wouldn’t eat because I wouldn’t feel in the mood to eat, I’d be uncomfortable but that didn’t bring too much but in the end I’d make myself eat so I didn’t miss out on food (laughs)

Interviewer: Laughs. OK so can you tell me a bit about the location of the pain?

Participant: Pretty central (participant moves and points to lower abdomen). Just down towards my lower abdomen, quite central although it would spread outwards.

Interviewer: Where would it spread outwards to?

Participant: Erm mainly sideways outwards so it would start quite central to the bottom of the abdomen and then it would spread out to the sides.

Interviewer: OK, is there anywhere else it would go?

Participant: I would get an aching down you know in the vaginal area but that wasn’t too bad.

Interviewer: So the abdominal pain was worse than the vaginal pain?

Participant: Yes. A lot worse.

Interviewer: OK, and can you tell me any times when the pain might have been worse or better? So were there any incidences when it would be significantly worse than others?

Participant: A lot of the times it would just be month after month that it would be bad but as I grew older and as I tried these different methods maybe things began to improve because maybe I did have the odd month where it was still painful but in comparison to what I’d had before and what it usually was, it would be significantly better. I mean I’d probably still miss school for it because I’d still be uncomfortable but I was a lot better on the odd few months, maybe every 4 or 5 months I might have a month that was slightly better than before.

Interviewer: Was there anything different about those months do you think?

Participant: Not that I could recall really, they were pretty similar.

Interviewer: OK, um can I also ask, do you have any un-related medical conditions?

Participant: Err I have asthma, which I have a blue pump for- I used to have a preventative pump as well but I’m not on that anymore. Um that’s about it unless you class like I have eczema, and hayfever.

Interviewer: OK, and erm so can I ask- how erm, how have you found the experience, you said you went to the doctors quite a lot and you had ultrasounds, how did you find those experiences, like before going and how did it make you feel after?

Participant: I think I’d be pretty frightened you know, a hospital for a younger person is a frightening place but at the same time, I felt like I’d finally gotten through cause they were like, there were a lot of doctors appointments where I’d just be given medication and it wouldn’t work so there’d be lots of times when in the hospital appointments, I felt like they were paying more attention to it and I felt like I would get a breakthrough and the hospital appointments were what led me to be put on the contraceptive pill which did in the end make things better- so they were quite a positive thing.

Interviewer: Did em, did anyone go with you to these…

Participant: Yeah, my mum would go all the time

Interviewer: How did you find that?

Participant: She was the best person. I wouldn’t really want anybody else there and I wouldn’t want to be by myself either.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you felt better cause someone was there…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Did you go to any by yourself?

Participant: No, no, no.

Interviewer: And with the ultrasound, I’m just wondering because there are different types of ultrasound, was it an abdominal ultrasound? – as in when you have a baby…

Participant: Yes

Interviewer: Um, can I ask you, what are you future expectations about the pain?

Participant: Err I would hope that it would stay the same but then things can change like that can’t they, they can change very quickly. Also, I was offered other options like the monthly injections or whatever and the coil so I’m actually going to see a gynaecologist next week because the doctor recommended that I come off the cerezet but then another doctor told me that I didn’t need to come off so things are a bit muddled at the moment but I’d rather remain on this form of contraception at the moment if it’s going to continue to help me in the way that it has done.

Interviewer: Mhmm. So what’s going to happen when you go to the gynaecologist?

Participant: Err we’re just gonna have a little chat, he’s gonna speak to me about the other options. I think there are complications with fitting a coil with somebody my age cause obviously it’s quite, not closed up- you know what I mean, in comparison to somebody who’s had children they can fit it much easier so we’re gonna kind of discus the pros and cons and see where we go from there.

Interviewer: OK, how do you feel about that?

Participant: A little bit nervous, I’m not gonna lie erm but again if it’s gonna help me and continue to help me then I’m gonna go for it and be happy with it.

Interviewer: OK. Have you em, have you thought about- I mean I don’t know if you want to have children one day or anything like that but if for some reason you ever want to come off the contraception, do you expect in the future it will be the same?

Participant: With the way I’ve been now, especially what happened to me recently, with trying to come off of it, I would expect that it would go back to the way it would be before. Although a lot of people, I mean again it can only be hearsay but a lot of people say that you kind of grow out of these things and so I don’t know what to expect but obviously I’d have to discuss it with the doctor or something and have to see the best foot forward.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK and can I ask- what do you think- do you know what the cause is of your period pain?

Participant: I’ve never been told, like I said they looked for cysts or things that could be causing it but they never came to the conclusion and in the end they just decided to put me onto the contraceptive pill cause they weren't really sure of what was causing it although we do have a family history of it, my mums were very much the same, my nans, a few of my cousins have had it very much the same, so I guess it could be in the genes (laughs).

Interviewer: Laughs. OK, so has anyone ever given you a diagnosis or anything like that?

Participant: Never, no.

Interviewer: OK, and how do you feel about that?

Participant: It is a little bit frustrating, considering that you go through all of that, all the hospital appointments and doctors, and also sometimes I worry about my sister because hers are quite bad so if she then goes down the same road as me, and obviously it’s happened to my mum, my cousins, and nobody’s had a diagnosis, that is a little bit frustrating because there’s obviously something causing it and I understand that it’s not easy to find these things sometimes but I think a bit more could be done to find them.

Interviewer: You said that you know that your family members, a lot of them have the same experiences so have you spoken to them about that then?

Participant: Yeah, especially my mum because she can relate really and because she told me about how my cousin, she had them fairly bad and I think she had the same solution as I did, she got put onto the contraceptive pill, and my sister’s been to the doctors about it. She’s not on the contraceptive pill yet but I think that’s the way it’s going to go because they’ve tried painkillers with her I think and they didn’t touch on it like with mine.

Interviewer: Yeah, do you- do you think it helps at all talking to people about it?

Participant: Yeah because you don’t feel like a special case if that makes any sense. You know that, it’s kind of, it’s going to change in the future, I mean my mum doesn’t have them as badly any more I mean she’s suffering from something else, she’s had endometriosis and stuff but her periods aren’t particularly bad. I don't think there’s anyone else in my family that’s kind of passed their teenage years, I don’t think they suffer with theirs particularly either so that’s kind of reassuring (laughs).

Interviewer: OK, (clears throat) do em, do you talk to anyone else about it?

Participant: My friend, erm yes because she goes through precisely the same thing only her situations a little bit more difficult err because her mum isn’t aware that she’s sexually active and so she can’t talk to her mum openly about it and she feels funny speaking to her GP about it cause her mum is quite close to the GP and although it’s confidential I still think she has a little bit of worry so we kinda, we have each other to talk to which is nice.

Interviewer: Yeah, that is good. OK, Can I ask you about the effect the period pain has had on your life?

Participant: When I was younger it was pretty terrible considering that I missed so much school and especially when they say even if you miss like a week you can drop a grade boundary and so sometimes I think maybe in some of the subjects that I didn’t do as well in in my GCSEs, perhaps that could have been down to so much absence so you know, one health problem has caused a drop in your achievement it’s kind of frustrating.

Interviewer: Yeah, I can imagine. Erm, how were your school and your teachers about you taking time off?

Participant: Erm, well because we’re in sixth form now, they’re a bit more- they focus on it a lot more, I mean they don't phone you up or anything like that in a massive concern but my attendance is still quite bad now due to other health problems and hospital appointments and stuff not related to my period pains, but they are fairly understanding- they don’t prevent you from having extra time off, they just inform you because you’re kind of independent in sixth form, it’s your choice whether or not you show up to lessons and that will impact on your final grade.

Interviewer: How about when you, you were younger- cause you said it started pretty much in year 7…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: So this has been an ongoing thing…

Participant: They were quite inconsiderate, erm especially like, obviously if you’re in that kind of pain or even if you have the average amount of pain that some girls have, you don’t particularly feel like taking part in PE lesson but they were very inconsiderate with that so they still made you continue or if you went to the medical room they would say everyone goes through the same thing and we can’t be sending people home and because of that they weren't considerate of the fact that maybe things were different for different individuals.

Interviewer: Yeah, how did that make you feel?

Participant: Again, similarly with the doctors- it was frustrating cause they were kind of grouping everybody together so rather than looking on an individual basis how it’s affecting one individual they should be a bit more considerate I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, do um, how is your mum, dad and family about….

Participant: Mum’s very understanding because she’s been through it herself so she knows exactly what me and my sister are going through and have been through so that’s brilliant. Family are all very much the same. Dad isn’t particularly involved but that’s not to say he’s not supportive you know, he is, if we’re in pain or something he’ll sit with us but obviously because he’s never really been involved in that kinda thing he doesn’t totally understand.

Interviewer: Are they OK about you taking time off school? Are they supportive of that?

Participant: Yes, um they know I’m not the kind of child to take time off willy nilly so they know that when I’m not well enough to take time off school, it is a genuine thing because they know that I’m quite a hard worker and I wouldn’t want to miss time on purpose so yeah they’re fine with it.

Interviewer: Can I ask- you mentioned that if you take a week off then you drop a grade- do you feel that it has affected your school performance in any way?

Participant: I feel that it possibly, I mean I don’t have any proof for it because obviously I’m in a different school that I took my GCSEs in, I’m in a different school for my sixth form but I feel like maybe if I hadn’t had to take so much time off, I would have had more time to study and I think, I had to take extra time to catch up on work that I missed while I was off which then impacted on the time I had to study for my exams and so I think it was all a bit of a vicious circle you know, taking time off, catching up, having more time off and I just kind of continued so I think it could have affected things.

Interviewer: Erm can I ask, how much time did you take off? Do you know?

Participant: Erm pretty much it was every year my attendance would be about 70% which obviously isn’t great, if you think that’s 30% of the school year.

Interviewer: And was that all because of pain or…

Participant: The majority of it yeah. There would be the odd few days when I might have had a hospital appointment or I might have felt a little unwell myself but the majority of it was period pains.

Interviewer: Yeah so how many, if you did take time off, how many days roughly would you have taken off or….

Participant: Err sometimes it could be 2 days in a row but on the third day even if I was in pain, I would try to get myself in because I wouldn’t want to miss any more time but yeah a lot of days accumulated.

Interviewer: And was that every month would you say?

Participant: Definitely, there’d be at least one day off every month due to that.

Interviewer: And how long did that go on for?

Participant: At least until I was in year 10 so for about 3 years. Even in year 10 I would have the odd day off but it wouldn’t be as frequent as every month, it would be a few days off in a year down to it- but that was after I’d received my contraception.

Interviewer: Erm and how about now?

Participant: Erm, it’s been dramatically different. I think this year, I’ve had one day off down to it and that was only because I was advised to come off of it so for the time that I’ve been continually taking it I’ve been fine and taken no days off for it.

Interviewer: OK so that’s been really effective, the pill and…

Participant: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: OK, can I ask if it affects daily activities at all?

Participant: Now or in the past?

Interviewer: Both

Participant: Now definitely, I remember one particular day when I had terrible period pains on my birthday and so I had family come down, we have a lot of family that live far away that come and visit me, I had a lot of visitors but I was just laid out on the sofa all day in a lot of pain. Um, I’m very close to one of my cousins who’s a similar age to me and also with my sister- we’re all close and she came down and we’d all planned a sleepover together which would have been nice on my birthday but I couldn't go to it because I was in a lot of pain and also I felt quite self-conscious about it aswell because I was bleeding quite heavily I was also conscious about, because I was heavy I had to change lots of times in the day and I was conscious about bleeding on the bed or something while I was with them so I didn’t end up going so even things like birthdays let alone daily activities.

Interviewer: Yeah, and what about daily activities? What type of things would it have affected before?

Participant: Anything like, I’d be laid out on the sofa and I wouldn't be able to move so I wouldn’t be able to get up and walk around the house to tidy my bedroom or walk to get myself food like it would be that bad. I’d get up to try and give myself a small walk because sometimes exercise did help a little bit but only the slightest bit. So it pretty much affected everything when I did have it.

Interviewer: So, how about things like hobbies and sports, you said like your hobbies are things like prosthetic makeup, reading and things like that- has it impacted on that?

Participant: Yes definitely because when you’re in that kind of pain you don’t feel like doing anything at all you kind of feel detached from the things that you’re interested in and you just want to sit and focus on finding a position you’re comfortable in and then try and get rid of the pain. That’s all it’s focused on, everything around that.

Interviewer: And do you find quite often you can get rid of the pain?

Participant: Err now definitely, now if I’ve got the pain I’ll just take a paracetamol or codeine so I can control it fine now but previously not at all.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK. And how about exercise, do you do any regular exercise or anything like that?

Participant: I’m not into sports but I do a lot of walking so I walk to and from school every day, I live about an hour away so I walk to and from the stations either end. I say I do about 2 hours of walking a day aside from anything I decide to do if I feel like I need a bit of extra exercise.

Interviewer: And do you find that period pain affects that at all?

Participant: Not currently, even if I’ve got a little bit of pain it’s not very intense so I find I might be able to walk it off sometimes.

Interviewer: Does that help then?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Good, and you mentioned before about PE lessons and that you know you wouldn’t want to do it but sometimes the teacher might make you do it anyway and how, how was that?

Participant: It didn’t really affect me because if they told me to do it, I'd sit myself on the side anyway because I really didn't feel like doing it or if they told me you know, everybody goes through it, I’d just take myself off to the office because you know, I could barely walk along let alone do a sport so…

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: So I didn’t really listen to what they said.

Interviewer: And how did that go down? What type of relationship did you have with PhD.. not PhD, PE teachers?

Participant: It wasn’t very good anyway to be fair because in our school the teachers did have a lot of favouritism towards the kids that were good at sports so all the really sporty kids that were really involved, enthusiastic and good at a sport they would favour over those of us who were perhaps not so good. So it wasn’t good in the first place but that probably made it worse cause they probably thought I was being you know, a disobedient student or disrespectful when in actual fact it was just how I felt in myself, I couldn’t do those things.

Interviewer: How did you find talking to teachers and things like that about it?

Participant: Quite awkward um, because you don’t want to share something quite personal with them especially if they’re showing that they, perhaps they didn’t understand because it wasn’t as bad for them in their childhood or male teachers it would be a lot more awkward because if they hadn’t had children of their own or sibling then they definitely can’t understand so it was quite difficult.

Interviewer: Did you find that there was a difference between male and female teachers then in the way that they responded?

Participant: Some of them. I mean, the female teachers were easier to speak to but as I said, those in the PE department obviously hadn’t suffered very much from it because they weren't considerate. But then again it was the same with them for all illnesses, if children felt unwell, they’d still make them do PE so I think they were a little too much invested maybe (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah (laughs)

Participant: But the rest of the female teachers were fine.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK how did you find the school nurse? You said that you used to go and get sent back to school really… how did you find that she reacted when you….

Participant: I think that a lot of kids, I mean I can’t prove it but I think a lot of girls when they didn’t want to be at school they would use it as an excuse like I know from friends experience, like a few times if I felt ill and I went to sit in the medical room, I know they were only considerate so they could stand with me but they would say that they had period pains so they could come and see how I was. So it was an excuse and maybe perhaps because they’d seen it so much, they thought that I was then using the same excuse.

Interviewer: And how about friendships, does it have any impact on that at all?

Participant: Only really if I couldn't go out but my friends are pretty considerate of that cause 2 of them have had it really bad and the rest of them were very considerate, even boys that we were friends with they understood that we’d been in a lot of pain so they didn't take it badly and they didn’t think that we were making excuses or anything like that, they were quite supportive.

Interviewer: OK, and has it been like that since you started getting the pain or has it changed over time?

Participant: No definitely I mean, I’ve kept a lot of my friends the whole way through so they have been pretty supportive. At an older age, even though you’d expect maturity to kind of change- it’s a little bit more difficult to talk to my newer friends about it because they haven’t grown up with it and they haven’t seen the effect that it has on, so they might not understand so sometimes I’m a bit reluctant to tell them but a lot of the time I have no need to now because there isn’t pain.

Interviewer: Yeah, good good good, erm and how about family life, has it had any impact on that?

Participant: Err not in a negative way, I mean aside from maybe mum having to take time off work to take me to hospital or doctors, or if I was in pain she wouldn't like to leave me alone so she probably had about the same amount of time off of work as I did for my school. Erm but no not in a negative way I mean there weren't any fights or and everyone were pretty supportive and I feel like in a way, because obviously parents learn with their first child, mum and dad have learnt with all the experiences that I had and so maybe, hopefully it helps them to cope better with (sister) if hers continue to be bad.

Interviewer: Yeah, so if your mum had to take time off work, did she find it easy to be able to do that?

Participant: Erm, her employers were fine with it, but I do think she had the worry in the back of her mind of either letting them down of missing out on the money because, we’re not terribly well off but we’re not terribly bad off so we’re kind of in the middle but erm, I still think it played on her mind a bit but moreso worried about the pain than missing work.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.. OK so how about things like, cause you mentioned about birthdays before, like family activities or…

Participant: Sometimes I just wouldn’t be able to go. Erm and obviously everybody’s considerate, they’re fine and understand but obviously it is a little disappointing in yourself, especially if it’s maybe for somebody else’s birthday you’d feel like you were letting them down and you should have overcome it by now and you shouldn’t let it affect things but nobody was ever, you know, horrible about it or anything like that, my family were pretty good with it.

Interviewer: So it was just how you felt…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, erm has it impacted at all on how you feel about yourself?

Participant: Erm, well obviously the raging hormones don’t make you feel great about yourself but it did make me worry at first because, following on from my mum, I have been underweight or teetering on the edge of it for pretty much my whole life and obviously there are health problems that will come from that and those types of things so I did worry if maybe it was down to that but now I know that it must just be in the genes or something like that so, it doesn’t really affect my view of myself you know I’ve pretty much overcome it now so…

Interviewer: Has it, has it ever done? So, when you did worry about that, did it affect how you felt about yourself?

Participant: Sometimes, I mean sometimes you feel like a bit of a wimp because every female, well the majority of females go through period pain, and sometimes I wouldn’t consider that everybody reacts differently and feels differently to it and so I’d feel like a bit of a wimp sometimes maybe for not bearing with the pain as well as I could have but now I know that was out of my hands so it doesn’t bother me anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s good. OK, can I ask about what support you have from people around you?

Participant: A good lot of support definitely, as we’ve said- family are brilliant, friends are brilliant. The health system wasn’t brilliant. Especially you know when you’re a child and you’re dealing with all your hormones, you don’t really need to be trying loads of different kinds of medication erm so I thought they were a bit bad with that, they didn’t even investigate they just tried me with lots of medication and straight away I felt like, if they had tried to investigate, even though I didn’t receive a diagnosis, I feel like they would have found a more effective treatment for me straight away rather than trying me on loads of different medications and causing me to miss school because of the pain.

Interviewer: Yeah, is um the ultrasound the only investigation that you’ve had?

Participant: Yes

Interviewer: OK and obviously that didn’t show up anything…

Participant: No

Interviewer: Erm have you asked for any others or anything like that?

Participant: No because after the ultrasound they put me onto the contraceptive pill which sorted things out and I kind of haven’t bothered with it since that because I’ve just left it alone and I’m satisfied with how it is now.

Interviewer: You’ve found something that‘s worked and you want to leave it at that..

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: You mentioned hormones before, can you tell me a bit more about that?

Participant: Mood swings, definitely were a big one. I feel bad now looking back at my little sister, I know everybody goes through mood swings but you know, one minute I’d you know wanna hang out with her and stuff and the next minute I’d probably be biting her head off although she does the same to me now cause she’s at that age and I’ve kind of passed it but I still feel bad for that affecting her. And erm, we have like a 4 year age gap, so when I got to that age I was kind of uninterested in doing things like playing dolls and stuff like that with her and that irritated her a little bit because mum told me that she’d want to play a lot of the time and I’d just be grumpy and be like oh no and I think that affected her a little bit. I wasn’t terribly bad but I just feel a little bit guilty for that.

Interviewer: Yeah, do you still get those mood swings?

Participant: On occasion but not massively bad. Sometimes you know, little down days when you feel like everything’s going wrong and you’re a bit of a failure but then that goes and you feel back to normal again so it’s nothing terribly bad.

Interviewer: Yeah, does that always accompany your periods?

Participant: Yeah because as before, I knew that the pain meant that I was going to come on, now I don’t have that pain before so the only indication is maybe if I’m a bit moody then I know I’m close to coming on I mean I’m regular anyway so I know when I’m coming on but sometimes you kind of forget, you don’t think about it and then the mood swings come about and I’m like oh, it’s my time (laughs)

Interviewer: Laughs, yeah. OK, can you talk to me a little bit about future plans? Whether it’s impacted on how you think about the future?

Participant: The only worry I’d have, is if I’d have to come off the contraception in any way so like how my doctor told me that, it panicked me a lot because I was worried that if they couldn’t find anything else to solve it in the way that it has been solved, I did worry a lot about that, especially now having to go into the world of work and things in the next year, you can’t really have as much time off, you can’t say oh it’s because I’ve got period pain- they’re gonna think you’re just trying to pull a sicky, so that did worry me but now that I’ve been told that it’s not a necessity that I come off of it, I’m quite satisfied at the moment.

Interviewer: What reason did the doctor give that it was a necessity to come off of it?

Participant: Erm this wasn’t my GP, my GP originally changed me over to the cerezet. But I started to get my migraines again in the past year and we kind of got a bit fed up so we wanted a solution, and we couldn’t get an appointment with our GP so we got an appointment with another doctor and she’s lovely, she looks into things but for some reason (participant burps) oh sorry! (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs) that’s OK

Participant: For some reason she said that you can’t be on any form of oral contraception if you have a history or are suffering from migraines. But actually it’s a very tiny risk when we looked on the back of the packet it’s barely anything in comparison to going back to how things were.

Interviewer: Yeah… erm OK can I ask as well, just erm, has the pain affected any other types of relationships like boyfriends, girlfriends, anything like that?

Participant: (laughs) No not particularly, it’s been in kind of friendship groups so they've been aware of what happened in the past so if I am to say oh maybe I can’t come out because I’ve got period pains, they won’t think oh it’s just an excuse, they understand so no it didn’t really affect things like that.

Interviewer: OK, is there anything else that we haven’t talked about today that you would like to talk about?

Participant: (pause) not that I can think of really, I think we’ve covered all bases.

Interviewer: OK well thank you very much (name), is it OK if I stop the recording now?

Participant: Yes that’s fine.