I: OK, so you’ve read the participant info and you’re happy to go ahead with the interview?

Natalie: Yep, no problem.

I: OK. So, first of all can you tell me about your role as a HCP?

Natalie: Of course. I’m a children’s nurse first and foremost. I have nursing experiencing though ranging over 20 years. I’ve worked in various hospitals and come across lots of different situations in my time obviously.

I: OK. Can you tell me if you’ve ever had to care for women regarding having had or seeking advice on pregnancy termination?

N: Mhmm. Well, yeah – both in my professional role and in my life in general – I mean a friend.

I: Right. Can you tell me a bit more about this?

N: In my work you mean?

I: Both really. Let’s talk about the work side 1st if you don’t mind?

N: OK, yeah. Well when I worked in theatres a good number of years ago – maybe even during my training now if I think about it….emm….well I was asked to care for a patient who had been in for a termination. It was the after-care side of it really, so I was OK with that. I did say to my mentor that I wouldn’t be happy to assist in the actual termination procedures in any way as personally it would have affected me. But, I was just caring for the girl really, so that was part of my job.

I: How did that make you feel?

N: Well, like I say that was just my job. I didn’t have anything to do with the surgical side of it, I was just there to help her afterwards but I knew she would be forever affected by what she had done. I didn’t really speak to her about it as such, but I could tell – I knew she was emotional about the whole thing. She was very young and had probably made a mistake. It’s not my place to judge though….like I said, I was there more for the care side of it.

I: OK. Thanks for sharing. What about the personal thing you mentioned….with a friend?

N: Yeah. Again, going back to probably my early 20s and my friend had got in to a situation where she was in quite a violent relationship. None of us knew the full extent really but we knew the guy she was with was a bit of an idiot really. He was a heavy drinker and things. Anyway, my friend got pregnant – I think her pill had failed her and she came to me asking for advice.

I: Oh really? What did you say?

N: Well I told her that I just couldn’t have a termination. We’re both Catholics by the way….we went all through school together. I mean it’s not that I’m like oh so holy, but I do have my beliefs. I’m still very much a practising Catholic to this day, but that aside, my views are that abortion just isn’t for me personally. I think my friend knew this already ‘cause she knows me and has done since we were wee, so she would know my feelings. Anyway, I also told her that I knew how things were with her partner and that. She didn’t want to bring a wee life in to that kind of set up.

I: Yeah that’s a difficult 1.

N: It was. I got her to go and speak to her Dr, but she ended up having a termination and that was right for her. We’re still friends and she’s happily married now with 2 beautiful kids but I know she must still think of that time and things. I mean I would never ever judge her for what she did and she knows that but it’s never really been spoken about.

I: OK. Thanks for telling me about it. So, looking at participation within the abortion process, what do you think that is? Like what constitutes participation?

N: Well there are various “methods” of abortion – like I mean taking a tablet and then there’s like the surgical procedure, so if we’re talking about the latter then obviously the Dr performing the surgery is participating as is anyone assisting in theatre. With the tablets, it would be the person signing that prescription. But ultimately, isn’t it the woman herself as she’s the 1 physically swallowing the medication? Hmm….that’s a tricky 1 as there are different ways of looking at it.

I: Yeah, that’s actually a fair point. So, is it fair to say that you think there’s different ways of looking at what participation really is in the process?

N: Yeah. But, ultimately, if you’re involved in assisting the woman then technically you’re participating I would say.

I: OK. What do you think has helped you to form your views with regards to abortion?

N: Well the way I was brought up I suppose. I come from a very large Catholic family and I’ve always been surrounded by babies and I wouldn’t have it any other way. We’re a very close family and I think morals and things rub off on you as you grow up. I went to a Catholic school as well and abortion was I would say frowned upon really, but times move on too though and things can affect people. I wouldn’t personally cope with having a termination but that doesn’t mean that I would judge anyone else for doing so. What other people do is none of your business unless it involves you directly in some way if you know what I mean?

I: Yeah. So, looking at conscientious objection to abortion….what does that mean to you?

N: Emmm….well it means that you can sort of opt out of taking part in a procedure. Like with abortion.

I: Yeah, Can you expand on that?

N: Well [coughs] it’s like what I said earlier about when I was training – I told my mentor I wasn’t comfortable with assisting in theatre that day and to me that’s CO. I mean it’s something that would’ve affected me maybe like on moral grounds and also in a faith type of way too. I know that I have a duty of care to my patients but I also have a duty to myself – to protect myself from feeling emotionally like pulled down. It’s not an easy job at times and you have to look out for yourself.

I: Yeah, I understand. So, from a conscience point of view….?

N: Yes. That’s it. Like I wouldn’t want that on my conscience.

I: OK. That makes sense. So, what would you identify as limitations to that? To CO I mean?

N: Mmmm….that’s tricky….like I suppose if you were short staffed it would be really difficult or maybe if you had a manager who didn’t understand where you were coming from. You know?

I: Yeah, I get what you mean. Have you – well you have had experience of CO as you said before. Have you ever had any experience from other colleagues?

N: Not that I’m aware of. To be fair, if you speak to a manager in confidence though it really is respected and confidentiality is something taken really seriously so that kinda protects you if you know what I mean.

I: So it’s never impacted on you then?

N: No as we’ve always been fine with the teams we’re in – we do look out for each other and your rights are generally respected too.

I: Do you think that’s important?

N: Oh yeah. In the workplace you have to let your colleagues know that you respect them. We work under pressure a lot and pulling together makes all the difference.

I: Sure. OK. Thinking about the topic as a whole….on what grounds do you think HCPs should be permitted to withdraw from? I mean within the abortion process?

N: I’ll have to think about that for a minute….well if it was going to affect you in such a way where you can’t do your job. Like some people may have had experiences of abortion that has affected them emotionally and they feel they just can’t….there’s also certain faith groups and maybe like cultural reasons too. If you have a genuine and valid reason that you can explain then you should be permitted to opt out if that’s best for you.

I: I understand.

N: I don’t know if I’m explaining that too well….

I: No, I get what you’re saying. You make good points. Is there anything else you can think of….that you might want to add?

N: Just that nursing and well the health care profession isn’t all hearts and flowers as some people might think. It’s a tough job and its peoples’ lives we deal with. People are so complex too and you have to really genuinely care I think to be in this kinda profession. Do you know what I mean?

I: Sure. I do. Have you always had the same beliefs? Have they changed in any way?

N: No, not really. Fundamentally I’m a caring person and I think that you have to have a certain level of empathy too. Well 100% really. I’ve always valued others and try to be a non-judgemental person too, but there are also some things I just don’t understand. Like women using abortion as a method of contraception….

I: How does that make you feel?

N: Well I get angry because you should learn from mistakes….is that not part of human nature? I don’t know because I suppose there are other things to consider there too….cultures and things like that where maybe protection isn’t really available or whatever….oh you could think about it and go on forever.

I: Yeah, that is true!

N: [laughs] it is true though….

I: [laughs] absolutely. Well, I think we’ve covered pretty much everything unless there is anything else you want to say?

N: I hope I have given you some help….

I: You’ve been great, thanks so much.