I: OK. So, you’ve signed your consent form and you’ve read your participant information form and you’re happy to go ahead?

Poppy: Yes.

I: OK, so 1st of all, thank you for taking the time to speak to me and just be as honest and open as possible. So can you tell me a wee bit about your role with regards to advising women who are seeking advice on pregnancy termination?

Poppy: Emmm….as a pharmacist, my job is to give advice on occasions and the morning after pill….

I: So, you would deal more with….

Poppy: Emergency contraception

I: Yeah. OK. So how do you feel about that then? During the course of our interview I’ll be looking at sorta personal and professional points of view if you don’t mind? So 1st of all, as a professional, how do you feel about giving that medicine out – or that advice even?

Poppy: Well, it’s my job, so I feel as long as it’s not abused then I do my job – sometimes, occasionally having to refer on, so as I say it’s my job….but that’s not to say myself that I agree with it.

I: Right. OK. Just what you say about referring on, so you don’t have a problem with signposting then?

Poppy: Mhmm….

I: OK. So you said that not necessarily you agree with it, obviously there’s maybe a professional and personal difference there then? So as a professional, you’d be providing advice or giving out morning after pill or whatever….so what do you mean by personal?

Poppy: Well, in my opinion….I would prefer say – prevention is better than cure. I would prefer the pill or contraception.

I: So you do you feel that there’s knowledge and education out there that would sorta prevent abortion having to happen. Is that what you mean?

Poppy: Yeah. Yep.

I: OK. What in your opinion constitutes participation in the abortion process?

Poppy: Well I suppose really anything to do with termination constitutes participation at different levels – from the morning after pill to abortion itself, involving surgery….

I: So even having discussions with the woman or patient, would you think giving advice would constitute participating?

Poppy: Yep. If it is regarding a termination, yeah….

I: Would you think that the woman has already made their mind up? So do you think taking that person forward in their decision is participating?

Poppy: Yes. I do.

I: What are your views on this – with regards to the whole topic? What do you think has helped you to form or shape your views and beliefs?

Poppy: Emmm….well there’s many different emmm and varied reasons why terminations take place; from age and sometimes you know circumstances out-with their control….

I: Have you had any experience – not necessarily yourself, but maybe other people in your life – have you had any experience of that?

Poppy: Emmmm….yeah. When I was at school, we were 15 and friend of mine got pregnant. This would have been in the ‘70s. Mid ‘70s say. She had to….back then it was a no no basically and it was because of the girl’s dad that the mum took her to London to have a termination and by that time she was about 5 months pregnant….so you know, emmm….that wouldn’t necessarily happen now because back then everything was different, there wasn’t as much knowledge of contraception or even knowledge of, sex so she had made a mistake and a genuine mistake and the boyfriend she was with she had been with for 3 years and continued after the abortion to be with him up until her 20s….

I: Did you see the effect 1st hand it had on the girl?

Poppy: Well since that day it was never talked about….I wouldn’t broach the subject to her and she never spoke about it and then her and the guy split up and they never had any children after that….that’s my only experience of….personally

I: Do you think that was justified then?

Poppy: Well back then in her case – it’s 50/50 then. Her mum thought – the views were it would hamper her life; she was good at school and that would be her career ended, her life over – that’s the way it was looked at and….

I: Do you think there was a fear of judgement there as well?

Poppy: It was definitely judgement. Definitely judgement.

I: So from an early age, if you don’t mind me asking….do you think that’s had an impact on your views on it?

Poppy: Well yeah probably….hopefully that same situation wouldn’t happen nowadays through better education, better contraceptive education and therefore more knowledge – we didn’t have the knowledge back then.

I: Do you think nowadays you’re more armed then? Although mistakes can happen? Is there anything else personally that might add…?

Poppy: Not really, no….

I: OK, thanks for sharing that. Would you say that you had [you said age 15] the same views prior to becoming a pharmacist?

Poppy: Yeah I would say I did….

I: Experience – witnessing someone live through….do you think that experience has an impact on how your views are maybe shaped?

Poppy: Emmm….well yes, but it’s just what II said before – the morning after pill is for a mistake [this is mostly my field now] but it’s just when things are abused then red flags pop up.

I: So if it’s being used as a method of contraception then?

Poppy: Yeah.

I: Then it’s fair to say you would have an issue with that? Obviously you would see different age groups, so you would see different reasons?

Poppy: Uhuu….

I: So again, just coming back to your own views….would you say they have strengthened over time or changed in any way?

Poppy: Emmm….I would say my values and beliefs have stayed the same really – just to reiterate that some situations are out-with our control….

I: What would you say CO means?

Poppy: I would say that CO means to me that a person has thought long and hard, using their own beliefs and have a duty to themselves….whether it be their own well-being and meaning that they cannot accept or agree to that situation.

I: So in the termination process, they can’t agree to participate?

Poppy: For some people it’s religion as well.

I: Values, religion and morals? Is it fair to say that plays a part as well?

Poppy: Yes. Uhuu….absolutely.

I: Looking at conscience….that clause within the 1967 Abortion Act, clause 4 does say that HCPs can withdraw on grounds of conscience – so would you think if that HCP can’t participate – would it affect them, their conscience? Might they feel guilty?

Poppy: You mean to object to helping someone at the time? Well….emmm….yeah. 1 part says if you take the job….

I: You’re sort of bound?

Poppy: Yeah, but maybe these days they should have a like being able to use CO or not….

I: Like you mean a policy….less of a grey area? So you know where you stand more? That sorta thing?

Poppy: Uhuu….yeah. Or maybe those people should specialise in something else….reconsider….

I: Maybe as a HCP in that field, do you think more so obstetrics and gynaecology rather than pharmacy that there’s more of a pressure there then?

Poppy: Mhmm….

I: What would you identify as limitations to CO. This can be a difficult 1 so I can try and break it down a wee bit more. If somebody wanted to use CO, what might prevent them from doing that?

Poppy: Well again, that would be their beliefs, wouldn’t it? If they’re faced with being the only person to – like if the person and child were in danger?

I: Yeah, there is that as well. I suppose that side of it – like you know maybe an issue with staffing levels….

Poppy: But then depending how far on the pregnancy is….do you save the [baby]….you’re gonna, well the person is gonna be OK, but you would still have those….it’s babies, you know….it’s a baby….

I: Like in an emergency situation?

Poppy: Yeah. Then the baby would lose its life.

I: Also, as far as limitations go – maybe depending on where you are working there may be a lack of staff or cover, so if you wanted to object, there may be nobody to take over and see that person through their procedure, so would you just do it? There’s so many things to think of and there’s the time factor….you said way at the beginning that you don’t have an issue with signposting, but again it needs to be done within a certain time frame because there is that to consider – might that be another limitation, I don’t know?

Poppy: Yeah, yeah.

I: Lastly, have you ever had any direct experience of CO – by yourself or colleagues, have you ever with regards to the morning after pill….have you ever had a situation where you thought I can’t give that out?

Poppy: Emmm [coughs]. We did have a situation where 1 individual had come in twice in a short space of time and we contacted the Dr – with it being such a short space of time….the morning after pill is there if you make a mistake and well with it being such a short space of time and things….emmm….so we did have that situation….

I: Was it for more contraceptive advice, sexual health advice?

Poppy: Absolutely, absolutely….and we did inform the person at the time we were doing so. It was granted 2nd time, but so it’s now in the hands of….

I: With a view of being sort of well educated? Or?

Poppy: Yes.

I: OK. Fair enough. I think you’ve answered the questions I….

Poppy: Well I hope I have been….I didn’t feel I was very….

I: You’ve been really helpful….just 1 other thing and that’s if there is anything at all you think we might have missed out – that you wish to add? Anything else during your career or from a personal point of view?

Poppy: Eh….I think – I’m hoping I’ve added something to your research. I don’t think there’s anything else I can think to add….

I: Thanks so much for your time, I really appreciate it and thanks for being so honest too.

Poppy: Thank you.