

**LSFS6**  
**Ruth**

Q. As I haven't got a questionnaire or anything, perhaps if we begin ... if you just tell me a few things, like are you living at home with your family?

A. Yeah, I'm living with me mam in a hotel. We've been in there for just over two months and I'm living with her in the hotel.

Q. So is it just your mum and you?

A. And a little boy. He's twelve.

Q. Is that your brother?

A. Yeah, me brother, he's twelve.

Q. And you're waiting for a council house?

A. A council house, yeah. They said they'd give us one, like in a few weeks ... a council house.

Q. Where were you before? Were you somewhere else in London?

A. Yeah, we were in Bow and I travel around and we were staying in Bow but we left see, because our home got took off us so then we were homeless.

Q. How long ago was that?

A. That's just before we went into the hotel.

Q. Really, not long ago?

A. No. Not long ago.

Q. So how old are you?

A. Sixteen and seventeen on 26 April. I'll be seventeen.

Q. And were you at school up until ...?

A. No. I was never at school.

Q. Never at all?

A. I was when I was small like, up until I was about six. Then we started travelling again and I never bothered.

Q. So where did you travel around? Were you just sort of ...?

A. Everywhere - Wales, Manchester, Bradford, Sheffield, everywhere we travelled. Never like over abroad, just everywhere we travelled - Scotland, Ireland, all places like that.

Q. Was that like, kind of ... were you with travelers or ...?

A. Yeah. That's kind of why I left school. Cos you were never left in the one place, you just kept travelling around. It's good though cos I'm used to it.

Q. And did you enjoy it?

A. Yeah, I enjoy it. It's the way I've been brought up isn't it?

Q. Yeah. So would you feel different if you get a house?

A. Yeah, but I'd like to settle down now. I'd like to settle down now. Cos my dad, he's inside.

Q. What, for a long time or will you ...?

A. No, eight years. He's been in a year and a half now like but when he gets out we'll probably go out again.

Q. Might you have left home by now then?

A. Oh no ... I won't like get married or anything 'til he gets out. I'll probably get engaged - not married until he gets out.

Q. What, you'd wait 'til he was around?

A. Yeah.

Q. Have you got someone special at the moment?

A. You mean a boyfriend?

Q. Yeah.

A. Yeah. I have a boyfriend. I've been going with him now two months ... going with him two months.

Q. And is he a traveler as well?

A. He was years ago but he settled down a long time ... he's a [HOSPITALITY ROLE] now and he goes to college on a Wednesday ... he goes to college and he's a [HOSPITALITY ROLE]. He wants to run his own business.

Q. What, have a [BUSINESS]?

A. Yeah. He's going partners with somebody else, like.

Q. How old is he?

A. He's eighteen.

Q. So does he work the rest of the time?

A. Oh yeah, he works five days a week, but he comes over every night, like.

Q. How did you meet him?

A. I met him in a friend's caravan. He was sitting in the caravan and he just asked me to go out, so I said OK, like. We went out for a meal and just kept seeing one another after that. We get on well though.

A. Good. And do you think it will go on?

Q. I think so. I think it will...

A. Can you tell after two months what sort of relationship it's going to be like?

Q. Yeah, I think I can. Like I know, I think myself I will end up with him, but we don't wanna get married 'til we're over twenty. Cos he wants to have a bit of career first and I wants to wait until my dad comes out so ... like he's willing to wait now so I think there'll be something in it.

Q. Has it got very kind of serious already, even though it's only ... you've only known him a couple of months?

A. It's not very serious but I think both of us know that, like, it will go serious more and more.

Q. Yeah, especially if you see each other every night. And what do you normally do together?

A. Oh, we just sit and watch tele, maybe an odd week or something we'll go out somewhere for a dance or something but that would be about it, just to the dance and back.

Q. Do you not go out because of money or because you don't particularly want to go out for a date?

A. Like, if he asks me I would go out somewhere tonight, and I would say, 'It's up to you', and he'd say, 'Come on, we'll go out for a meal' or something. So then we'd just go for a meal and back in again.

Q. And does he pay for that?

A. Yeah. He pays for everything.

Q. Cos I don't expect you've got much money, have you?

A. No. Nothing.

Q. Have you ever done any work?

A. Yeah, I was a [INDUSTRIAL ROLE] for about six months.

Q. Where was that?

A. EAST LONDON.

Q. Oh, that was before ...?

A. That was before, yeah. I was a machinist there in EAST LONDON. It was OK. I liked the job. It was too stuffy in the room and I kept taking dizzy spells and so I just left that.

Q. Yeah. Quite right. It could be bad for your ...

A. And it wasn't a good wage so ...

Q. Did they give you training or ...?

A. No. They just put me straight on. No training. That's how I done that to me finger. There.

Q. Yes, I can see. What, on the machine?

A. Yeah. On the machine. And I still worked on one after that.

Q. Do you know what you might want to do at the end of this?

A. Yeah, I'd like to look after old people. I've always wanted to look after old people. I'd like to ...

Q. What, like in a nursing home or a something like that?

A. I don't know. Anywhere at all, so long as I could look after them. Some of them, I'd like to go to their houses and clean and do their shopping and that. Just look after them.

Q. And before this boyfriend, had you had others as well?

A. One. This is my second. One before this fella.

Q. And what was...? Was that a serious one?

A. No. No. He was too strict, too bossy so I just left.

Q. How long did that last?

A. I was going with him for about six months.

Q. That's quite a long time.

A. I know, I just left him.

Q. What, because he bossed you about?

A. Yeah, he used to be, he used to be funny, like he always used to boss you and you had to do things he wanted, you had to do it all. I never bothered and then I just left him. And then there were a year in between the two of them. A year in between them.

Q. And did either of them include some kind of sexual relationship?

A. No. The first fella, he did try but this one I'm going with now, he never did.

Q. Did he try and force you or persuade you or ...?

A. Oh Lord no. Nothing like that.

Q. But if you'd been willing, he would have done?

A. Yeah.

Q. So how did you feel when he did that?

A. I just felt that he had no respect for me. Felt like it was no good anymore because he had no respect for me, like, so I left. Like, I didn't actually tell him - I got someone to tell him for me.

Q. Was it that that triggered it off as well?

A. Yeah. If he had've just tried once, maybe it would be OK, but he tried again, like, so I just said he must have no respect for me if he tried twice so I just told me friend to tell him to break it off. He kept, like, wanting to see me, all after but I never bothered. He got married after that though.

Q. Really?

A. He got married, yeah.

Q. How old was he then?

A. He was sixteen.

Q. And he got married at sixteen?

A. He got married at sixteen. Just turned sixteen he got married. He's married now just a few months.

Q. Isn't that a bit young to get married?

A. Oh, it's far too young.

Q. Did he have to get married?

A. No, it's probably just, you know, like, to spite me or something. I don't know. But he got married and he's supposed to be very bad to his wife now. So I'm just glad it turned out the way it did.

Q. Mm. What did he do? Did he have a job?

A. Yeah, he used to do [SKILLED TRADE], not then like, now. He does [SKILLED TRADE] now.

Q. Mm. Was he a traveler too?

A. Yeah. He was a traveler as well.

Q. And do you have strong kind of beliefs about when you have sex or when you wouldn't have sex?

A. Yeah. Not before marriage. Like, I don't know, I suppose other people, other travelers believe in ... maybe they will before marriage, loads of them have, but myself, I wouldn't, not before marriage.

Q. Is that to do with something from your parents?

A. Yeah, from me mam's side - nothing like that like before marriage.

Q. Is that what she's taught you?

A. Yeah. That's the way she's brought me up. Nothing like that.

Q. And is that sort of to do with religion at all?

A. No, it's just the way she was brought up as well so she's bringing me up that way. Like I'm glad she is cos that's how I like it.

Q. Yes, you haven't thought of rebelling against it or anything like that that some people would think ...

A. No.

Q. And so has it ever come up at all with your boyfriend now?

A. No.

Q. You haven't talked about it at all?

A. We've never talked about it. It's a thing that don't worry you. It probably bothers him, like, but it don't bother me, like I wouldn't make for it to happen or anything.

Q. And do you think, say if he did bring it up, what would you do?

A. I just think I'd just ... I think I'd leave it then and see if he'd bring it up again. I suppose if he did I'd just class him like the other fella.

Q. But ... and then would you leave him, do you think?

A. Yeah, cos I'd given him a second warning, like. I'd just leave it then.

Q. And would you talk to him? I mean, would you explain what you felt?

A. The first time I would. I'd just say, 'Look, I want nothing like that before marriage', like, like I did say that to the other boy and he just tried again, like so ... he wasn't sort of listening.

Q. It's a bit like a test of love in a way, isn't it, whether it keeps coming up? Do you see it like that or ...?

A. I just see it like a boy's using you if he asks you to do it a second time. I just thought he was going for you for just the one thing. My mind carries away with me. Maybe other people don't think it but that's the way I think. Like you see all these young girls having children and all at no age. I wouldn't like to be like that. Oh, I'd love children, I'd love loads of them but not before I'm married though.

Q. And where did you learn about things like sex and ...?

A. I just picked them up along the way. Nobody actually sat down and told me about it. I just picked it up as I was going along.

Q. Did your mother ever say anything?

A. No.

Q. No, nothing at all?

A. She never said nothing. She just said to me that you wanted to do nothing before you were married and things like that.

Q. But she didn't actually say what nothing was or ...?

A. I had to learn myself. And I never went to school to find out. I just had to learn myself.

Q. And do you think that was from friends or was it from television or books or anything like that?

A. I think it was mostly tele because the things they put on the tele ... I think it was mostly the tele that you learn everything from.

Q. So what happened for instance when you started your periods and things? Did somebody explain that?

A. No. I knew really before it, cos you hear all your friends talking about it so I knew before that.

Q. That's true. And then has anyone ever talked about, I mean, things like AIDS that's been, you know, there was this AIDS or there is this AIDS ...?

A. Yeah, I've heard it on tele. Like sometimes, maybe at a very odd time at night-time, there would be something on the tele about AIDS and drugs and things like that. That's the only

way I know about it, like.

Q. Do you actually know what it is?

A. No, as far as I know it's just a disease that anybody can pick up, AIDS, like if you go with dirty men or you get needles or something. Things like that. I don't actually know of any other way that you can get it or anything.

Q. And what about other sorts of sexually transmitted diseases. Do you know anything about any of those?

A. No.

Q. Do you know actually about sexual intercourse itself?

A. Oh yeah, I think so. I know bits, like, but I don't know everything.

Q. And have you ever kind of thought of looking at picture-books or anything like that?

A. Oh no, it disgusts me.

Q. Really?

A. It disgusts me. I can't look at anything like that. I haven't got the stomach. Or, you know, like video tapes and that. It just, I don't know, disgusts me, looking at things like that.

Q. When you say video tapes, do you mean more sort of ...?

A. I mean, more like them dirty video tapes now. I couldn't watch ... I could probably watch a video tape with little bits in it but, you know, an actually dirty video tape, I couldn't sit down and watch that.

Q. But what about things like ...? I wasn't thinking so much of those sort of video tapes but kind of more educational books or whatever that might actually ... that you don't have to read - I don't mean particularly reading lots of things but actually where they give pictures and things like that.

A. I suppose I'd look at them, then but I don't know, I wouldn't like sitting there watching a video tape of it.

Q. Well, it's a bit public?

A. Mm?

Q. Is it a bit public? Like everyone else would be watching it, too?

A. Yeah, I suppose.

Q. And was your dad around before he went inside? I mean, did you all live together?

A. Oh yeah. Me dad, me little brother, me mother and me big brother. And me big brother now, he lives by himself. So it's just me, me mam and me little brother now.

Q. And do you wish you had gone to school?

A. Now I do, yeah. I'd love to learn how to read and write now.

Q. But will they teach that here?

A. Yeah, they start teaching us here, like, our English. It's really good. And maths. They're starting us from the bottom and we're working our way up when we see what we know. It's really good.

Q. And what about your big brother? Did you ever talk to him about kind of any personal things?

A. No.

Q. It wasn't that sort of relationship?

A. With my family?

Q. With your brother?

A. Oh no.

Q. What about your dad?

A. No.

Q. No? What did your dad do before he went inside?

A. He was a [INDUSTRIAL ROLE], things like that.

Q. What did he go inside for?

A. [SERIOUS CRIME]. He went in for [SERIOUS CRIME].

Q. That's a shame. Do you miss him?

A. Yeah.

Q. But you go and see him presumably?

A. Yeah, we go up and see him once the month, no, I'm sorry, twice the month. Twice the month ...

Q. So do you ... if you had to describe to somebody what sort of person you were, or you are rather, how would you describe yourself as a person?

A. Describe myself as a person?

Q. Mm.

A. I don't know. I live in me own world, if you see it that way, like, how can I describe myself? I can't even describe myself. I dunno, I'd like just one friend, just one friend only and just there by myself. I don't like mixing with a load of people. I don't mind, say, here, but while I'm at home I just like to clean and get on with my own work and just quiet ... quiet way of going. And I don't think about anything else.

Q. Are you interested in anything particular outside of that?

A. No. I just like what I'm doing here now.

Q. And do you kind of smoke or drink?

A. Yes, I smoke. I wouldn't drink.

Q. You don't drink?

A. No. I don't drink. I smoke though.

Q. A lot?

A. No, not much. I don't smoke ... I used to before I started here but I only has about one fag a day now while I'm here.

Q. Well that's not a lot.

A. One fag a day while I'm here. And that's it. When I go home, then I smoke.

Q. Do you see that as kind of taking a risk with yourself?

A. Probably taking a risk but I is hoping that ... I've tried to give it up but I can't. I can't give up.

Q. How did you start?

A. I can't remember. It was years ago.

Q. Really?

A. I've been smoking for years. I was no age when I started smoking.

Q. Was that because your family did?

A. Me mam and dad did and now me big brother, he smokes.

Q. But your little brother hasn't started yet?

A. No. He hasn't started yet. He's twelve.

Q. So what do think will happen in the next few years? Do you have any idea what ... or sort of hopes that you think will happen to you?

A. I'd like a career. I'd like to do something, something worth doing and then, I suppose, settle down, but I don't think I want to travel anymore. I'm not sure. I'd like to settle down in a house and start a family probably after a while.

Q. But is all this definitely after your dad comes out?

A. Oh yeah, not before. Definitely after he comes out if I have to wait the full eight years.

Q. You don't think anything would come in between that? I mean ...

A. No. Doesn't matter how much I'd love a boy, I'd never do anything like that until me dad came out.

Q. Is that because of the way you feel about your dad?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you have a very strong relationship?

A. Yeah, we have. Because, like, when we go up to visit he'd say, 'If you've any thoughts of marriage in your head, don't get married until I come out'. So I just say ... I'll never get married 'til he comes out.

Q. Are you closer to your dad than your mum?

A. Yeah. More closer to me dad.

Q. Has it always been that way?

A. It never used to be when he was out but when he went in I really realised ... like I loved both of them, like. I used to go everywhere with me dad, everywhere.

Q. He took you around?

A. He used to take me everywhere.

Q. So it's changed a bit since he's been inside, has it, your relationship with him?

A. Oh no. No, I still feel the same ... still feel the same.

Q. No, I thought you'd just said that it was ... that it wasn't so much before he went ...

A. No, before he went inside I never, like ... I always used to go out with me dad everywhere but I never really thought that I really did think so much, until he went inside and then I realised, like.

Q. Yes, when he wasn't there.

A. When he wasn't there. I realised then. It will always stay the same, like.

Q. And has he ever said anything about, well, kind of ... well, obviously he's said about marriage, but he hasn't said anything about sex?

A. No, nothing like that.

Q. Is it ... do you think it would be important to you, having a sexual relationship?

A. Sorry, I don't understand you in that.

Q. Do you think it could be important?

A. You mean like for me?

Q. For you. I mean, I know you don't have one with your boyfriend and that you don't plan to until you get married but is it something that you think has importance?

A. I don't know. I don't really know. It's funny, but even if I was married I wouldn't like to do it ... I mean, it's something that I would never like to do. But probably after a while, like, when I am married, like I'll start a family. It's not something that I'd like to do for a long time.

Q. Do you feel a bit scared of it?

A. Yeah.

Q. Why do you feel scared?

A. I don't know. I just feel scared of it. I just feel funny with it. All the people talk about it and that. Just feels funny.

Q. But if people ... well, people, boys, actually touch you, are close to you, hug you, kiss you, touch you, do you feel funny about that as well or is that alright?

A. No, I don't feel funny about hugging and kissing and that. It would be just something like that other word you mentioned that I wouldn't ... I wouldn't like to go that far.

Q. What, actually having sexual intercourse?

A. Yeah. I wouldn't like to go that far.

Q. But do you think it would be something you wouldn't enjoy?

A. Mm, I wouldn't enjoy it. I don't think so.

Q. Why do you think you wouldn't enjoy it?

A. I don't really know. I just wouldn't think I'd, like, enjoy it.

Q. Do you think it would hurt?

A. Mm.

Q. What's made you think it might hurt?

A. I don't know. You see, in travelling life when the girl gets married, on her first night she seems to tell every girl about it and when she talks about it it just puts you off ... when she talks about it.

Q. What, saying that it did hurt or that she didn't like it?

A. Yeah, it did hurt.

Q. But then do they ever talk about it later when it's sort of ...?

A. No, it's just that one night and that's it. They never talk about it later.

Q. No, because there's a lot more than a first night in a way. And if you've got someone that you have a very close and warm relationship with then they should be very sort of gentle and not hurting, as it were.

A. It's something that I've always been afraid of, I think.

Q. What, ever since you heard about it, sort of thing?

A. Yeah.

Q. And is there anyone else, like friends of your own age, that talk about it, or you could talk about it with?

A. No. I have one friend, but we never talk about things like that. She's twenty-four but we never talk about things like that.

Q. Does she have a sexual relationship with someone?

A. No, she's getting married.

Q. But she's also ... yes, I mean, her views are the same?

A. Yeah, I'd say so, because she's never talked about it, she's never, you know, like said anything about it. She's getting married. She'd never do anything like that either. Like, I know her, I've known her for years and she'd never do anything like that either before she got married.

Q. I was just wanting to ask whether you knew about contraception and things like that. I know you're not having a sexual relationship or anything, but is there anywhere that you've also picked up about family planning, birth control, that sort of thing?

A. About birth?

Q. No, basically about things like the pill and ...?

A. Oh, yeah.

Q. And preventing pregnancy?

A. Yeah, I knows about that, yeah.

Q. But how did you pick that up?

A. Because ... just girls where we are, they take some pills and they all do chat about it. Some of the married women do talk about it and there's the needle in the hip that they get every three months or something. They talk about it.

Q. That's right.

A. They talk about that as well.

Q. But do they mention any other methods like the condom, which is the sheath, johnny, whatever?

A. Yeah. Yeah, all them things.

Q. What do they say about those?

A. Women don't ... they just have a laugh and a joke about them. They don't actually ask the men to put them on.

Q. They don't?

A. No.

Q. So do the men not use them?

A. No.

Q. Would you say in, like, amongst the community you lived in, which was obviously a travelling community ... were a lot of people like you and girls keeping themselves 'til marriage or was there a lot of ...?

A. Do you mean like were all the travelling girls keeping theirselves 'til marriage?

Q. Um, yeah, were their views similar to you or were sort of a lot of girls also having sexual relationships before marriage?

A. There were more girls like me. There were a good few that used to have it before marriage but mostly it was like me and they wouldn't before marriage. Some, most, a good few would before marriage, half and half, you can see it that way.

Q. Gosh. Was it a close-knit community? Was everyone sort of ... got on well with everyone else?

A. Oh yeah.

Q. So that you were all kind of very friendly and you know ... a nice place to be?

A. It is a nice place to be, I mean we all get on great, even though the ones ... like, we don't have no spite against them for doing it before marriage, you know. Things like that. But we all get on the same way, just like ... we all just get on the same way.

Q. And did people ... well, girls, young men, young women, did they generally look for boyfriends or girlfriends amongst other travelers ...?

A. Yeah.

Q. Rather than going outside them?

A. No, they always just mostly stayed inside the travelers, you know, travelling boys go for travelling girls, travelling girls go for travelling boys, like that.

Q. But yours isn't a travelling boy.

A. No, he used to be but he's not now. He's settled down.

Q. Because presumably that would mean that you'd just carry on travelling, in a way wouldn't it?

A. Yeah.

Q. I suppose if somebody wanted to settle down the best way would be to look for somebody outside the travelling group.

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you think you ... would you want to have a travelling boyfriend?

A. No, not now.

Q. Right.