Parenting and Disability
Attitudes towards Disability (Podcast Script)

I was affected by my disease at 3 years of age and as the eldest child all my siblings only knew me like this from birth. My parents encouraged me to explore what I could do not what I could not do. As we grew up I asked them for help when I needed it.

Well when I met my future husband some of the family asked things like

“Is he for real?”

“Why does he want you?”

‘How are you going to manage?”

Some of the extended family questioned why I was being sent to an expensive school and I was aware that an expensive dowry had had to be paid to my husband’s family to marry me. They did not see me as a beautiful, clever or pretty woman but an expense. This was made worse perhaps as they saw no others with a similar condition.

They were trying to protect me and were angry as they were worried that I may be harming myself. These comments and reactions caused a gulf between us.

When I became pregnant the 2nd time their reaction was ‘oh no not again’ whereas I was pleased as I wanted to be pregnant again. It probably did not cross their minds that I may want to be pregnant.

I did ask for a normal delivery although I said I would have a caesarean section if it was a matter of life or death. I felt very lucky that there was
strong team of female consultants and midwives around me pushing for me to have a normal delivery.

I had a good community midwife and GP but felt that the community midwife was checking my child more than other children. At the time I did not question this but then when I talked to other mums and realised that I was being monitored and that these extra checks being made.

She kept asking “are you managing?” Well as I had managed the pregnancy and a normal delivery so why did they think I could not look after my baby?

What I needed was more information and not to be asked “what do you need to help you manage?”

I felt I was being judged about of being a mum.

Other peoples’ reactions say when I was out and about with the children would say

“Oh you have a baby” Oh are you married?”

They need to realise I am a human being and I was aware they may think I was not up to being a parent.