

PSY SESSION 6 TRANSCRIPT

Recording starts

E: We'll go round and talk about the ways that you've organised it. This is quite interesting, can you say a little bit about how you've organised it?

26FS: I've got my piles in 'necessities', 'very useful', 'useful' and 'luxuries'.

E: Did anybody do similar to that?

28FS: No.

27FS: No I did it by the amount of energy they take.

E: You've done something similar as well.

29MS: That's what I did yes.

E: What are your categories called?

29FS: I just put this pile that they take a great deal of energy. I happen to know all of this because I've had trouble with British Gas, and I had to do a lot of research on my appliances so I know that these take a lot. These don't take so much, and these are very low on the energy. These I don't have.

E: You've got a pile of things you don't have, that's a good way to separate it.

28FS: I've got a pile that I don't use, a line that I use once or twice a week, those I use every day, but those are used constantly, so they're more or less permanently on, trying to work out which ones I use more than I should.

E: That's an interesting way to do it, and you've got?

MS: Mine are just the things that use hardly any power at all, low powered things, which wouldn't mind if you had them on for 5 or 10 hours, stuff that gets used mainly every day, used as I need them, and these just suck energy.

E: Which things do you think use the most energy here?

MS: The kettle. I mean the kettle is about 2kw, the hob can be about 2kw as well.

E: What things are in your high energy pile?

27FS: Well, I find that my electric kettle seems to take a lot...

26FS: Yes.

28FS: Isn't it anything with heating uses an awful lot, anything that uses a heating element of any description.

27FS: ... and my oven and my microwave I've got are very heavy on electricity.

E: It seems that both of you are both quite...

26FS: Savvy.

E: Yes, they're very savvy. You're giving me exact figures why?

MS: I've just always known that sort of thing. I've done electrical work so I know power ratings and all this sort of stuff. I'm quite conscious of what uses different amounts, like in the evenings I'll have my television on, maybe the computer or the laptop, but I don't have any lamps on whatsoever, it's just a waste of energy to my way of thinking. It may look nice, but the television gives off enough light to see by.

28FS: Oh dear. I sit in my sitting room and I've got three lamps on.

MS: That's exactly the same as my mum.

28FS: I never put the big lights on, always put lamps on.

E: Why's that?

28FS: Because I just like it.

E: Atmospheric?

28FS: Yes.

MS: More of a woman thing I'm sure of it.

28FS: Possibly yes.

E: Do you use the main lights or the lamps?

26FS: I have to use the main lights because the back room hasn't got a window at all so I use the main lights. I've got a daylight table lamp so I can turn the main light off. I tend to use that because I do a lot of craftwork. I sew, I knit and I make toys and things like that so I need light and I use my daylight table lamp.

My kitchen has got strip lights, but it depends, I can leave that on and the light can come into my room

where I work so, as I say, it depends on how dark it is whether I use the kitchen light as well. I don't have more than two lights on at a time, and I've got to put the light on when I go up and downstairs because I've got to see, but other than that I make sure the lights are turned off.

E: I'm quite interested in the way you've done this actually, so you've got, 'necessities', 'very useful', 'useful', and 'luxuries'. What kind of things are in your luxuries?

26FS: The coffee machine, the tumble dryer, the dishwasher, the computer, the laptop, the electric toothbrush, the internet, surround speaker, mobile phone charger, stereo, DVD, printer, hair curlers. Forgive me, I grew up without all of them so one knows one can manage. In my eyes when it comes to power ratings, they're luxuries.

E: Would anyone agree with that kind of thing?

28FS: Yes. I mean a lot of the things we use, we don't actually have to have them.

26FS: The problem at the moment, I've got camera charger there but you can only buy digital cameras now. I mean buying one, trying to find rolls of film and people who develop them and whatever. I've got a friend who's a keen photographer, she's got three cameras, and she said, it's finding somewhere with a dark room and the rolls of film. So the camera charger might come under 'very useful', but at the moment, you know it's here or there. The same with mobile phones, we grew up without them so they're not a necessity. I mean in this day and age yes, they seem to be, but it's a seesaw thing, so when you come to categorising it like that.

E: What would be your essentials and your luxuries if you were to organise it like that?

27FS: My essentials would be my kettle, because I love my cup of tea ...

E: Everyone agree with that?

26FS: Yes, definitely.

MS: Hard to live without one.

27FS: ... washing machine, the microwave and my oven ...

26FS: Oh definitely those. The best invention is the microwave, I love it.

27FS: ... and a television. I've got a new television, it's a big one, my son-in-law wanted me to have a big one, does that mean the bigger it is the more electricity it uses?

E: Not necessarily.

27FS: It seems to add to my consumption.

E: A big one might use more than the same make and model but smaller, but then depending on which makes or models you've got, they might use different in between.

MS: The flat screen ones use far less energy than the old tube televisions did.

E: Exactly, so you could have a small old-fashioned television and this new one would use less.

27FS: The other thing of course is my electric fan heater in the bathroom. I feel the cold so I have to have that, but that does take a lot.

26FS: My bathroom hasn't got a window so there's an extractor fan there, so every time I put the light on the extractor fan comes on automatically, so how much that uses, but it's a necessity in this house.

E: In your bathroom you've got a fan heater, how is the rest of the house heated?

27FS: I've got a small radiator and a bath. I haven't got a shower.

E: How is your house heated?

26FS: I've got gas central heating.

27FS: Yes, that's mine too.

E: What sort of heating have you got?

28FS: Gas central heating. It's not on all the time. I set the thermostat at about 20°, so it switches on and off as it needs to during the day, because I'm home all day, so it doesn't go off at a set time and then come on again. At the moment it's not actually too bad because the flat stays fairly warm. I might in the evening just go and switch it up for 10/15 minutes to take the chill off and that's it, but then at 8.30pm it goes off completely until about 7.45am it usually switches on.

26FS: Have you got a frost guard on yours?

28FS: Yes I have.

26FS: That switches itself on if it drops below 0°.

28FS: Yes, and I've also got a daytime and a night time thermostat, so if I'm not well and I need a bit more heat in the night, I can have it to come on at a lower temperature, but I don't if I can help it, (a) I don't like sleeping if it's too hot, and (b) the cost of it.

26FS: You forgot the electric blanket.

E: Do you want to add that one?

26FS: Oh yes.

MS: That's a luxury.

26FS: Definitely a luxury, I would agree with you on that, definitely a luxury.

E: What do you think of an electric blanket, is it a luxury?

27FS: I haven't got one. I wouldn't like one.

28FS: No.

E: What would be your luxuries and essentials?

28FS: Well, the essentials are the kitchen things and the heating. The digital television box nowadays although we could do without it, we don't and the television. I mean there's an awful lot that I use that aren't essentials, but they're necessary to a certain extent, which is why I did the, 'only use once or twice during the week', because I don't want to use them more than that.

That's it really - digital television, fridge freezer, central heating, internet router, the boiler, stair lift. The rest, even the cooking, I could turn on and off as I need to. The essentials to me are the things I have to have on. They might use a lot but I do need them.

E: Yes of course.

26FS: The fridge and freezer and the microwave because of the clock, are on permanently, and the digital alarm clock upstairs.

28FS: I don't use one of those so that's in my 'not ever used' pile, along with the bath, in case anybody wonders.

E: What would be your essentials and luxuries?

MS: Well, the essentials for me are anything that provides entertainment, so it's the computers and the laptops, that's what I call 'essential'. A luxury for me is the heating, because it uses the most energy. I'm on a key meter ...

26FS: So am I.

28FS: Oh yes.

MS: ... I was going to get changed over but they wanted about £60 to change the meter and I just haven't got around to paying it.

28FS: Why have you got to pay to change the meter?

MS: Some companies charge and some don't.

28FS: I was going to say when I moved into my flat 7½ years ago it was on a key meter.

MS: When you're a new tenant they don't generally charge you.

28FS: Yes, because they changed mine over without any charge, because I thought I'm not paying the extra.

MS: British Gas was charging about £200 at one point to change theirs, because I thought about changing suppliers and getting them to do it. I did a bit of investigating on the internet and found that British Gas charged that much, so I thought I might as well stick with what I've got and just find the £60 somewhere eventually.

26FS: This is it, for that reason you stick.

28FS: It's too much hassle to change sometimes.

26FS: Yes, exactly.

26FS: you go through it all and you on the phone, and yes no, yes,... forget it I'll stay where I am. If someone came, alright you might now like door to door sales men, but if someone came there and sat down and showed it all to you on paper you might get some idea but when you are on the other end of the phone. I can't make sense of half of what they are saying.

28: I had somebody came to the door about the gas and the electric, he sat down and explained it all, showed me all the figures, this is what you'll be paying, you'll be paying less - and within four months I'd changed because it was double what he'd told me it was going to

be. He went through everything working out what I used, what I used before, how much they'd charge for using the same amount, and I ended up four months later changing back.

26FS: The problem with the key meters is I always make sure that the card and the key are charged, I mean when they get down to a certain level I think, I'll feed them, so if someone says, how much do you use a week or a month? I've no idea, I just make sure I've got money on my card and my key so if it gets below say £5 I'll top it up.

MS: It varies with the weather, doesn't it?

26FS: Yes, so how much do you use a month? I'm sorry I haven't got a clue.

MS: In summer I haven't got hardly anything.

26FS: Precisely, that's no problem, but at the moment the gas, it's a constant 10 day thing.

E: Is that how you use the key?

MS: I'm generally on emergency most of the time. I have tried getting in fund because I don't know whether it's true or not, a lot of people say it costs you more on the emergency setting.

E: I used to be on it and that was the case then. I don't know if it's the case with you or not. Do you find you're spending quite a lot then?

MS: When I first moved into my place, I've lived there 20 years, I could quite happily put £6 or £7 in my electric and it would last me two weeks. Now I'm putting in maybe £10 every five or seven days, because of the weather at the moment. Apart from that my central heating uses about 25p an hour. I've watched it on the meter going round. I've timed it over a couple of hours. I've got a one bar electric fire that I'll just heat the front room with and I can have that on for ten hours and it uses 1 unit basically.

E: So you find that's better?

MS: Yes, much more economical.

26FS: I've switched the radiators off in the room I don't use, the spare bedroom I've switched it off, and I've switched it off in the front room because I stay in the back room. If we get a summer I'll move back, but at the moment it's easier to turn the radiators off and stay warm, keep the bedroom, the bathroom and where I am and keep that

warm. Whether it saves money or not I really don't know, because I don't know how to work it out, it's too difficult meters and whatever.

28FS: I don't, I'm useless. They tell me I've got to pay x amount a month and that's what I pay and hope it works out right.

26FS: That's the way I work it. If someone could come along and say, your radiators are using 25p every five minutes or something, then we'd know where we were. The same with your washing machine, I always make sure I've got a full load but I don't know how much that uses, if someone says, yes, it uses 1,000 watts per wash and that's £10, then you know where you are. Unless someone breaks it down like that, I'm sorry but the majority of us are ignorant when it comes to how much power we use.

E: You said you've got 'high power' ones that you watch quite carefully?

27FS: Yes, I've had to because the electric meter I had was 75% out of gear and British Gas wouldn't have it.

< Break in recording >

E: We were talking about heating and how we heat the house. You specifically said that you had yours at 20°; does anybody else know what their thermostat is set on?

26FS: Mine is set at 18°.

MS: Mine varies depending on how cold I am. Last night I put it on at about 15°.

E: So you change it as and when you need it?

MS: Yes.

E: How about you?

27FS: I only use mine manually. I use it when I need it.

E: The radiators?

27FS: The radiators yes, the central heating. I also use the electric fan in the bathroom when I wash or have a bath, which is on the wall.

E: Why is that?

27FS: Well, I don't find central heating is that marvellous, because it only seems to heat a certain part and it's cold

up there, and I feel the cold. It's nice to have central heating but I don't think it's that marvellous.

MS: Yes, you've got to sit virtually right on the radiator to feel anything. With the fire we've got, it's got a reflector on it and you can feel it across the room.

E: What kind of fire is that?

MS: Just a single one bar electric fire, the old fashioned type thing. It's not very nice to look at but it does the job.

28FS: Do you have an extractor fan in your bathroom?

27FS: No.

28FS: Because they put an extractor fan in mine, and it's useless. I've covered it up and blocked it up because you can see daylight through it so all your heating goes straight through.

When they changed my bathroom into a wet room, they put in an extractor fan, they have to do it now apparently because of damp problems, it's one of these European things, I mean my bathroom window gets opened every time I have a shower. They put it in and now you can see daylight through it. You've got to leave it on all the time I was told, but you can see daylight through it even if it's not on.

I've covered it in bubble wrap and all sorts, because every time the heating goes on, heat rises and it goes straight out through the extractor, even when it's not on, so if it's on and it's actually taking the air out, you're heating the outside. I've covered it up so it's a bit warmer. I went in there and it was absolutely icy and I thought what on earth the matter is, I thought the radiator had packed up and it wasn't, it was this extractor fan taking the hot air straight outside.

E: How often do you do your washing?

27FS: I do it once a week as then I've got a full load, but I do hand washing as well.

E: Do you have your own washing machine?

27FS: Yes.

E: Drying?

27FS: Well, we're very lucky we've got a communal dryer so I use that.

E: Does that come off your bill?

27FS: You pay as you use it. That's a real boom, especially in the bad weather.

E: How about you?

MS: I've got my own washing machine. I do a couple of loads a weeks, there's only me there. There used to be communal washing lines outside but over time they broke and nobody replaced them. A couple of times I put them back up, and then the grass got overgrown. I'm on the first floor, and it just got so much hassle taking stuff out there that I started hanging it up indoors. Then when they put central heating in, that was a godsend anyway, because you bung a t-shirt on and whatever and it would dry in 20 minutes, so I do most of my drying indoors.

E: How about you?

28FS: I live on my own but I do about four washes a week. I must use an awful lot of clothes. Bedding is usually one, then light stuff and dark stuff, and then sometime during the week you've got another ...

MS: See, I don't separate anything like that, it all goes in one.

28FS: ... I do at least three a week. Drying, there is a communal washing line and if it's nice weather I do put it out, but if it's cold like this I don't bother, because I live upstairs and you've got to go all the way down. It's usually on a clothes horse in the bedroom and it dries overnight. I've got a washer dryer but I don't use the drying part unless I've got to, because that is really expensive to run. It's only if I've really got to get something dry I'd use that one, what I usually do put it over a clothes horse and leave it in the bedroom, and, especially if it's a nice day, stand it near the window because with the sun on it dries quickly.

The council don't like you drying clothes indoors because it causes condensation and damp, so if the washing lines in your communal area are broken, kick off, We did, we had four we couldn't use, it took us 12 months but they came out there eventually, cut down all the weeds, cleared it all, and replaced all the lines. It took us a long time and we had to keep on but we got them all replaced in the end, because it is nice in the summer to hang your washing out, plus it's cheaper.

Ms: see for years I was the only one that was clearing that area

28: that's what we was doing, there was one or two of us that kept it clear and used it. And the others just used it to dump all their broken rubbish and furniture. We kicked

off and kicked off, it took us 12 months but they will do it in the end.

E: How about your washing?

26FS: I've haven't got a tumble dryer. I can hang it in the utility room, or, on the days when the sun doesn't shine, it can go in the spare bedroom. I have got a back yard but we haven't had the weather to hang things out.

< Break in recording >

28FS: I don't know why I do so much washing.

26: what kind of washing machine have you got? (at 28) My washing machine has got a quick wash on it and a small wash.

28FS: Oh yes, I've got quick wash on it but it doesn't get it clean. All these low 30° washes always leave stains behind. I try and be sensible but by the time I've changed my bed, and a light lot of clothes and a dark lot of clothes.

28: why do I do so much washing?

Ms: some people do do that type of thing though.

MS: I'm a real night owl so I hardly use my bedroom. I just sleep on the sofa so my bedding doesn't get dirty very much.

26FS: I tend to put bedding and towels in together.

28FS: Yes, but it's only me so my bedding and towels that's one wash, all my light clothes, then dark stuff, but then usually during the week I make up another load. I can't believe I do so much washing compared to other people.

E: One for delicates?

28: no I'm afraid I don't believe in hand washing with delicates, no that's a lie I did yesterday because I've got a blanket that is pure wool and it's supposed to dry cleaned. Well I don't believe in dry cleanings so literally just got put into a very delicate wash.. I can't believe that I do so much washing compared to other people.

< Break in recording >

28FS: I'm in a first floor flat and I'm using more heating at the moment because the man in the flat underneath died, unfortunately, and there's nobody in there yet. I can feel the difference because my feet are always cold. All his

heating, he used to have to have a gas fire on full 24/7 so of course my flat was really lovely and warm. Even that has made me notice a difference, so I'm obviously using a bit more to compensate for that.

< Break in recording >

28FS: 'I only have my heating on for 2 hours every day' - that's what I mean, you could say that and they could say, 'oh no, you're using a lot more than that', how do you prove different?

27FS: Exactly.

26FS: Mine is on about 9 hours a day.

28FS: Yes, mine goes on and off all day long.

FS: It depends on where you live. I mean I'm upstairs and the wind blows *noise* and I think that makes a lot of difference.

E: One thing we may be looking into is about having different energy prices. Is anybody on Economy 7?

26FS: No.

28FS: No.

MS: No, but I've heard of it.

E: So we could have something like that where at different times of the day, maybe a bit more detailed, but at different times of the day there could be different costings. Are there certain things you do, thinking back to the cards and the energy usage we were talking about earlier, that you could put off?

28FS: Yes.

E: For example, if the electricity was going to be cheaper in two days, could you wait to do things?

28FS: Yes.

26FS: Oh yes.

E: What kind of things would you put off?

28FS: Washing.

26FS: Yes, washing.

28FS: Ironing.

26FS: When there was Economy 7 I know friends with children would do washing late at night, switch the washing on at about 11 o'clock at night.

28FS: See, I won't do that because I'm in a flat and I'd think it was going to disturb the people downstairs, but if everybody was getting a system like that then yes, because everybody else would probably be doing the same. Vacuuming, I mean I always do it in the morning. Why? would it matter if I did it in the evening?

26FS: No. Forgive me, you're in a flat, you have to think up and down, as you say, but my friend says, 'I set the alarm and fall out of bed at 11.30 and set the washing machine off', because it's cheaper then, she says, 'all I have to do in the morning is peg it out or chuck it in the tumble dryer.'

Yes, you will put it off, if you say, in two days' time you'll only pay 50p a wash, we'd all do it in two days' time. Alright the Grid may go off or you'd have to do it in different areas, but you can work it like that, you can say, it's cheaper then I'll do it then. It's like everything else, sales or travel, whatever. I mean when British Rail, years ago, did a £1 fare they'd never had so many passengers.

28FS: We haven't got to be set to these timetables that we've got. We've all got them up here our timetables for doing things.

26FS: Yes, it is routine or habit, or whatever, but given the choice.

28FS: Change them if it's cheaper. If it's cheaper change them.

26FS: You can change routines definitely if it's cheaper. You'll change your routine. I'm sorry but that's a fact of life.

E: Are there any things that you couldn't, things that you need to use them when you need to use them?

28FS: Well, cooking. You've got to eat so you'd have to cook.

26FS: Yes, you've got to eat.

27FS: But don't you find if you've got one of those steamers, you've got two saucepans and a steamer in one, that that saves electricity.

20FS: Yes. My pressure cooker is the same thing that saves.

28FS: Yes. I'm afraid they'll go bang.

20FS: I've got to admit the very first time I used it I sat there, I put it on and I sat there looking at the clock. And it was alright. That does save money.

28FS: Other than actually feeding yourself, is there anything that you have to do at certain times?

26FS: No.

28FS: You can vary most things, can't you?

26FS: Oh yes.

MS: Yes.

FS: Yes.

28FS: I can't think of anything else I've got to do at a set time. I mean I do things at set times but I don't need to, so if it was going to be cheaper two days later, then I'll do it two days later. That would be brilliant.

26FS: Lighting and heating I'm sorry that's got to... you can't, but the rest of it; vacuuming, washing, ironing, or whatever you can sort out.

28FS: Yes, do it as and when.

MS: They're starting to bring in these LED lights now, they're definitely more common, but they're a bit more expensive than the low energy bulbs. I won't use them, I hate them.

E: The low energy ones?

MS: Yes.

28FS: Yes, they don't seem to be very bright. I do use them.

MS: I've still got them but then I don't leave lights on.

26FS: The light isn't strong enough.

28FS: No, but I do use them. All my lamps, everything, I've got low energy bulbs.

26FS: My friend has got a problem; she can't use them because they start her migraines off. She's had to stockpile on the old round bulbs. We vary so much, people are different. She said she was finding herself having more migraines.

E: From the quality of light?

26FS: That's the only thing one can assume.

28FS: Some people can't stand strip lights.

26FS: As you say, the same with these neon lights.

28FS: Yes, a lot of people didn't like those.

26FS: No.

27FS: But do you find that there are certain times of the day, perhaps if it's cold, that the pressure on your electricity isn't the same?

26FS: Yes.

28FS: My mother always used to say that, Sundays when she was cooking a roast dinner, it's not my fault it's not ready, there's not enough gas, there are too many people using it.

27FS: I know for a fact it isn't. It does make a difference; it takes you longer to do whatever you want to do.

26FS: That's been in the papers, on Christmas Day, or whatever, it goes off the Grid. They timed it, so many kettles went on or whatever, I think it was the Royal Wedding they knew when there was a break because all the kettles went on. It's been in the papers. As you say, the pressure does go up and down.

27FS: By the way we've only got two weeks of gas to use, that was on the news, only two weeks.

MS: Oh yes.

E: When was that?

27FS: This was a few days ago, so we haven't got long.

28FS: What's going to happen, we're just going to run out of gas?

27FS: They reckon we've only got a two weeks supply of gas for Britain.

MS: If the foreign gas supplies were to stop.

26FS: If there was a crisis.

28FS: In other words we're relying on other people again. Well, that's alright, why don't they invest in wave energy? I mean I know people moan about these wind mill things, but I'd much rather have dozens of them than I would a nuclear power station. I mean it's there, for goodness sake use it.

FS: Precisely.

FS: I mean if they put a load of those along, when I look out of my sitting room there's a row of hills right the way along and if they put them all along there I might think, oh, but they're not going to bother me, but if they put a nuclear power station there I'd kick off. I mean we've actually got a tree up there that's not a tree, it's a mobile mast.

E: But it looks like a tree?

28FS: Yes, somebody said to me, 'that's that mast thing they were on about', and I said, 'where?' I said, 'oh yes, that wasn't there.' I didn't even notice they'd done it, so if they put all this wind turbines along there, so what?

26FS: Let's face it, we've had to live with motorways and cars that have altered the landscape.

28FS: We all moan about how cold the wind is, well, let's use the wind to warm us up.

26FS: That's it, everything changes. The motorways changed the landscape, railways changed the landscape, why shouldn't the turbines change the landscape?

28FS: It's nothing is it?

26FS: No.

26FS: If it's going to cut down on my energy bill, put another one up please, I don't mind.

28FS: We're an island, we're surrounded by sea, why can't they invest in wave energy and things. For goodness sake it's there, use it, but they just seem to sit there, we might be able to do something about that one day. Get on and do it now.

26FS: The rainy day has arrived.

MS: They'll leave it too long and then they'll be in one big panic.

28FS: Yes. I'd have wind turbines put on my roof if I could, and solar panels. I don't know about waves but I'd have everything else.

26FS: If they want solar panels or whatever, how come the Government or the councils haven't got together and sort of said

28FS: I mean Exeter City Council have put loads up, but not even 50%, why stop there? I suppose it's the initial cost to them that puts them off.

27FS: See, I don't understand how councils put these panels alternate, and unfortunately I'm the one that hasn't got a panel. I don't understand that.

28FS: It's just every now and again.

27FS: It's every other one.

28FS: Around our way, you get two or three together there, then you might get a gap of one - they're here, there and everywhere. I think a lot of it depends which direction the roof is facing, obviously if it's facing north, they don't do it.

MS: Yes, mine was facing the wrong way.

28FS: But up the road from me, there are houses that have got them on, we haven't got them but there are blocks of flats three or four high that have got solar panels, so they've obviously found some way to divvy it out between them.

Recording ends 37:58 minutes