

Annual Public Health Report 2020

Time to Change: Working Towards Better Health For All in Suffolk

Transcript: Darcey (20) Student, Martlesham Heath. University student studying outside of Suffolk.

Q: How has COVID-19 affected your life?

Darcey: Well, I was away at University when our lockdown like, first happened. So I had this sort of like do I come home to family, do I stay? With friends... so for me that was a really big decision. In fact I was really ill from around Christmas all the way through lockdown. So when I came home, getting medical help was actually really hard for me because I was registered back in Chichester, where my University was and I was obviously trying to see a medical professional in Suffolk... and I'd go to the medical professional in Suffolk and they'd go 'Oh you need to go back to your, doctor back at University' and then the doctor at University would say 'You need to go to your home doctor'. So it was really sort of a hard situation trying to get some help. So then when I did actually, after a long time of backwards and forwards getting some help from the doctor and that, I can't fault it like the virtual help that they did, like I got a diagnosis of severe asthma. So that was a bit of a like 'Oh OK' [laughs] but once I got that help, things were a little bit easier.

And obviously University got put online which was, really sort of an uneasy situation for all of us and it was right around assessment time. So, you know we were all having to adapt with, how to film- I mean I'm on a dance course, so having to film myself dancing in my living room or my kitchen, it was really hard and obviously everywhere being shut, like you couldn't hire out anything so just had to make do [laughs]. But I think we were quite fortunate in the sense of, my generation are really good with technology. So we were able to have like Zoom calls and do quizzes weekly and, have online socials and be drinking and stuff with friends although it's not the same, we made do with what we had. I mean it's certainly for me, being away from people, it made me more aware of actually, if they are your friends you get what I'm saying [laughing] and throughout lockdown I lost one really close Uni friend. To a road traffic accident. So being in lockdown for me actually that really didn't help at all, losing them and like not having my support network of friends around me. Or from before if I've had someone pass away in my life, I had access to everyone and I was limited to my Mum and my Dad and, it's not exactly the same when they didn't actually know the person.

Q: How has the last few months affected your physical and mental health?

Darcey: So obviously, I had really like bad chest infections, respiratory infections. From December through to April, May time. And then eventually, got the asthma



diagnosis so, all of that just really messed it all up for me. Mental health-wise, I suffer, well... [laughing] I do now have a diagnosis of severe anxiety. And I also have also have separation anxiety. So lockdown, COVID, really increased my anxiety levels. The asthma diagnosis that was really sort of an anxious thing to get to grips with. Just feeling isolated. Really like didn't help at all and the separation sort of thing, I was with my Mum and my Dad but, I wasn't with all those people that I had such a great time with in my first year at University. So... It just didn't, [laughing] yeah it really affected my mental health. So much that, towards the end of lockdown I was able to get in contact with my Uni, to see if they could give me some support. And... they were just a little bit unhelpful. In fact I still haven't got any support, in place, and we're now in November [laughs].

Q: What are the factors that have contributed to your health?

Darcey: Good health is not being ill which, I'm rarely ill normally anyway. Having a really happy mind. But to get those things, for me... I need to be able to be in a dance studio dancing, I need to be able to go to the gym, and workout, and go out drinking with friends and socializing obviously. I had none of that over lockdown. So yeah, basically I had everything taken away, other than the four walls of my house [laughs]. From my experience being a student I definitely feel like I was kind of, messed around and they didn't seem to want to help getting a GP. Back in Suffolk was such a hard process, and without my Mum and Dad there I think I'd probably have given up, because I just feel like It was just such a tedious process that could have been made so much easier, but I just felt [unclear] we're more still focused anyone that had COVID and stuff like that. There wasn't, the smaller sort of not necessarily like life threatening illnesses and stuff, and they weren't worried about.

Q: What would help you to improve you health in the future?

Darcey: I'll be graduating in 2022. So... I'm sort of looking ahead to where I want to be working, that sort of thing. And... I know that if I can do the sort of work I want to do, that health-wise I'll be really happy, In a good place and I know the same with my parents, like them knowing I'm happy that will put their health in a better place.

