

# Annual Public Health Report 2020

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

Transcript: Jill (66) Semi-retired, very active in local community in Sudbury

### **Q: How has COVID-19 affected your life?**

**Jill:** It's impacted on us, hugely. We support, directly support my mother-in-law who is now 97. And, luckily we had moved her into extra sheltered accommodation about 18 months ago. Certainly she wasn't, in the community as such. But the implications of lockdown, and everything that's gone with that has been a real challenge, because she has dementia. She's got in sight and she can't... she can't understand what's going on. She can't understand why she doesn't see us because we used to have her here three days a week. And so we miss her, and she misses us.

I have managed to get a Samsung, iPad through the county council. Which with the help of staff I can see her now, she can see me, on a screen and talk to one another. Whereas we went through a period up until July where we couldn't see her at all, then she can see one of us in the garden. But she's always seen two of us, myself and my husband, and so... she always asks where the other person was. And because her husband died and her eldest son died, she thinks that if the other one's not there. Could they have died as well? Plus visiting in a garden, the garden doesn't mean anything to her she just looks like a scared rabbit. And then she goes to want to hug you, and then you say 'No it's got to be two meters away'. And she doesn't know why it is the way it is. And you don't know if you say too much to her 'cos it will upset her, or not.

So we find this device that we've now obtained, which has been really helpful, quite good as long as we can stick to... the staff have to take the device to her, because she can't operate it herself. You know this person where she lives, she should be more independent than a residential home. And yet she's not been able to leave her flat, where she lives, and mix with anybody else, for months. And then the television was off, the radio was off, she was saying she was lonely, she was fed up. And that's when we managed to get this device, because I could just see her mental health just going down, terribly. And that's impacted on us because you know it upsets me, it upsets my husband, and your powerless, there's nothing you can do about it.

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

**Jill:** I'm a person who lives long terms with epilepsy. From quite a young age it was helpful for me to be out of the house and doing things, and not being at home. So I've



worked all the way through my life, and although I'm still working now, and I'm not furloughed, I'm actually finding it difficult to not having that interaction with people and going places. So there are definitely days where my mood is low. Because of that, but also I get very, very angry I suppose is the only word I can say, I get very angry and frustrated with, when we can't get things right for mum, or anybody else that I'm working with.

Other than that I'm not as physically fit as I was 'cos I'm sitting down doing this sort of work, I'm not getting the exercise that I was. And the summer was easier to go out and get exercise and it's not going to be easy in the winter months.

**Q: Have you generally experienced good or poor health? What do you think has contributed to this?**

**Jill:** I would say my husband and myself are in, good health. But I think that's because we do a lot of physical exercise. So my husband plays squash and badminton, and he helps with a volunteer with Suffolk Trust. And for myself teaching yoga and chair based exercise, and running groups. I think it's really important to be involved in things, and not think about age. I've just been answering an email just now, and they said something about older people and then I thought... I don't know if I'm old, young, middle-aged. How do you pose it to someone else, when you can't actually figure it out what age you're supposed to be yourself.

**Q: What are the factors that would improve your health and that of you family?**

**Jill:** I think, living in Suffolk a lot of the places are isolated and we don't have the transport links. If I was in London say, I personally think a lot of this is state of mind. And... if you can maintain, a positive attitude, so at the moment a lot of people are saying 'Oh it's not just gonna be four weeks is it' it's gonna carry on and on, I'm just keeping this it's four weeks at the moment. I will deal with it when I get to the end of four weeks. A lot of, I'm finding a lot of people are quite negative about things and it's very hard to try and pull the positives. I think it's really important we do that because it helps your wellbeing.

**Q: To what extent do you think people's health is affected by factors such as where they live, who they are or how much money they have?**

**Jill:** Well my daughter lives 250 miles away, with her husband and her children so we don't actually see out grandchildren. Or my daughter. Last time we saw them was July, and before that it was in January. So we miss being, any closer than that, so that's really important to us that we have, a way of... contacting and being with them. I'm not quite sure how that would happen really, we'd like to maintain our health and our physical ability I think we'll both get very down, if we can't do the physical things we used to. Although we're looking alternatives, something less demanding you can take



up rather than, that's it finished. I mean my husband was unbearable to live with between March and July when you could play badminton or racquetball. And because he's over 70, originally he couldn't go out- [sound cut] so he had no idea what lockdown was like out there. So I told him he's lucky he married a younger woman [laughing].

No I just think it's not about how many years you live, but it's the quality of your life. That, we have to take responsibility for it as well rather than people waiting for somebody else to do it for you. So for me it's like a 50/50 thing you know. I need to do something, what's on offer, they offer, do I want it, and you sort of enter into that together.

