

# Annual Public Health Report 2020

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

Transcript: June (69) Shotley Gate, Retired

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

**June:** I think the contact with other people obviously limited, and thanks to new technology then we're able to keep some of that going. But, it's very difficult not being able to see people who live further away. You know we have far flung family which is very difficult that we can't, actually be with them. We have... some young grandchildren that we're not seeing growing up properly. Although we do get the videos, so you know there's a compensation. I think the risk is greater than the fact that we have to give u, you know some... semblance of our normal order.

### **Q: How has your health been affected during this time?**

**June:** Yeah, physical health has, I've not had as much exercise as I would have liked, mainly because we did have some really bad weather, it was nice to be able to get out in the summer and go walks and things. But we've done more things indoors you know like... gardening and clearing up and things, like most people. Health-wise I have had a few problems, but the surgery has been fantastic. I don't feel that my mental health has suffered in any way, but I know it's very, very different for a lot of people. It's just very difficult to keep that communication going in a normal way. You know we need to get to Birmingham occasionally, we need to get further south occasionally, but it can't be done so we have to put up with that. But I'm actually OK with it and... just hoping and waiting for the next, change that we can actually get together again.

### **Q: What has contributed to your health over time?**

**June:** I have had issues, I have lost a sister. Due to other health issues and that was a couple of years ago so that's been very difficult, for all of us to cope with actually. I was able to meet with the community connectors at that time and they were a tremendous help. The... community connectors, were in our village at the time. And were visiting regularly so um- [sound cut] -join in, just to make an appointment if you had a problem. And we had a lot of community things for mental health going on at that time. I was very, very busy and always thought I never would need anything like that. But found that... with my sister it was a very difficult time... and difficult to talk to other family. We did obviously but it's still you know, not free to say what maybe you'd like to say, support isn't what you'd want to give. Because you haven't got the inner strength. To be able to, even figure out why you're feeling so low and you feel low



because you've lost a close family member who was, very... you know we are a very close family.

So being very busy I sort of carried on and what have you and then, when this happened another incident happened which was extremely upsetting. I carried on for a while but after that it was OK because I thought 'Perhaps I'll just go along to the van and I'll sit down and have a cup of coffee and just have a chat, and see what can happen'. And as it turned out I didn't need further referral but I was able to talk to the community connector, Sheila who... was very supportive, she was able to make me see that my wider life actually still existed. Understood reasons why I stopped doing certain things, and other reasons why I, perhaps wanted to withdraw, and other reasons that were stopping me getting on with my life which were basically to do with... just being so busy, and trying to untangle all of that. And where was I in all of the middle of that. Obviously I still have difficult moments, surrounding my sister, but... we've picked up and life is moving on and it's not so easy for the rest of your family, her own daughters really miss her, it's really hard.

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

**June:** My life isn't, affected by... who I am or the money that I have or don't have. We live in a beautiful village but it is isolated. And most people need cars to get there, the bus facility is, is virtually zero. People can't just come and go as they please it's very, very difficult for, anybody who doesn't have a car, to be able to move anywhere around. As for money no people choose to live here for reasons that maybe they can afford to live here or they can't afford to live here, and they would maybe like to live here. For instance the youngsters who like to, be nearer their family who do live here, maybe have to move away. But -is a shortage of housing for them. And there's an awful lot going on. We also have a lot of community groups in Shotley we used to be the most active village. [laughs] We can't say that at the moment, because a lot of the groups have had to shut down. Or to just close the doors for a while you know the village hall isn't available anymore. So, I think there's an awful lot of people wandering around, lost. Because they haven't got those normal connections that help to keep their life buoyant.

We have a lot of walkers coming round here, and I think there are mixed feeling about whether there are, too many strangers coming in and maybe bringing the virus with them, but equally, it's nice for everybody to get out in the beautiful scenery that we've got round here. We don't have many businesses either and they're suffering too... pubs, takeaways, they've actually adapted really well they've managed to do deliveries, they've adapted from good to takeaway. Or when they didn't do deliveries before when they were a takeaway they deliver now. And also there's lot of improved ways of paying for things which... with the older community that's much more difficult, because the cash isn't available but they can get that from a post office which thankfully has also won an award recently, and our Shotley stores and it's an



amazing... facility he's actually been able to provide us with so, we can get help if we need it.

**Q: What would help you improve your health in the next few years?**

**June:** Self-discipline, number one I would say for myself. But there are a lot of people as well encouraging active walking and small exercise groups that will be available once we're free. I think people don't want to be worrying about, whether they can get an appointment with the NHS. Because although they have been extremely good I wouldn't want to criticize, they can't help the fact that, they have more cases now, but in the future... I think there's maybe a lot to be learned from some of the changes, the adaptations that have happened at the moment. I do find that it was easier to talk to doctors online. Or on the phone because the calls seemed to last a bit longer, and obviously that's safer, it's also quicker, but you know that's just the way I see it and I think that there's an awful lot that we can carry forward from this time.

