

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING TRANSCRIPT

'Fighting for our Rights' project

Surname	Cannings
Given names	Sheila Ann
Date of birth	1957
Place of birth	Leatherhead
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UP: This is an oral history interview with Sheila Cannings by Uloma Paris on Tuesday, 16 May 2017. Also present are Zoe Perry and Jen Kavanagh. The interview is taking place at Sheila's home in New Malden as part of Kingston's Centre for Independent Living's Fighting For Our Rights project. Please could you state your full name?

SC: It's Sheila Ann Cannings.

UP: What is your date of birth?

SC: [REMOVED] 1957.

UP: Where were you born?

SC: Leatherhead.

UP: What were your parents' names?

SC: Gertrude Ethel and Ernest Edward.

UP: What were their professions?

SC: My father was a postman in his main life and my mother was a housewife.

UP: Do you have siblings?

SC: Yes. I have a ten year old--, ten year old, ten year older sister and my brother who was seven years older passed away last year.

UP: Where did you go to school?

SC: Therfield in Leatherhead.

UP: What age were you when you left school?

SC: Sixteen.

UP: What was the first job you had once you had finished your education?

SC: I carried on education with Bentalls department store and got a business degree.

UP: Can you talk me through your career between your first job and when you became a mother?

SC: With my condition my memory is not very good, but I mostly say what I've been told so there might be gaps [laughs]. When I left school I went to Bentalls and did four years there within their departments, doing a business, accountancy and management course and through that got various promotions as I carried on. Became eventually a buyer for them and bought prams, babywear, school wear. And when I became pregnant I stayed at home for a couple of years and then did some accountancy work for a stained glass window company.

UP: How many children do you have?

SC: Two.

UP: How did you manage motherhood as well as being a businesswoman?

SC: With my daughter I had left my career and as I say, she had two years of me constant [laughs], and I only took sort of part time work following that and my ex husband, he helped with the childcare.

UP: What job were you doing when you were diagnosed with your condition?

SC: I wasn't working when I was diagnosed, my disability came around in the pregnancy with my son, and through that pregnancy I became disabled.

UP: Could you tell me more about what caused your disability and how the condition presented the first time?

SC: Sure. During the early days of the pregnancy I suffered severe sickness and in between my daughter and son I also had a pregnancy which was a twin one and I lost that one, and it took me I think seven, eight years before I fell for my son. But as soon as I became pregnant I suffered the extreme sickness, couldn't eat, drink, water or anything, you know, was hospitalised and went into what is termed through my legal case as semi coma, where I became unconscious and they fed me nutrition through intravenous. And they didn't give the right quantity, so fortunately my son was fine but it left me brain and bone damaged. So I woke up--, and actually by that time I was at home, woke up but didn't recognise where I was, didn't recognise the person who came in when I screamed, which was my husband [laughs]. Didn't recognise my daughter at that time and didn't know me, didn't realise that I was pregnant until obviously the bump was there and didn't know any of my family, friends or situation I was in. It was a complete blank, yeah.

UP: Can you explain what [medical term? 00:05:57] is and what impact it has on you?

SC: [Medical term? 00:06:05] is the name they put on my condition, 'cause the brain was starved during the lack of nutrition. It's usually referred to alcoholics, which I wish I had the drink to celebrate it with [laughs], but because it was a similar vein of result that's the term they put on me. It affected the

memory and balance in my brain, so that affect my walking and so on. And the impact as I previously mentioned is that annihilation of my previous life, so what I'm saying now is more an interpretation of what people have told me rather than my own perception of my life, and that's the impact through with most things, yeah, in life that's happened and happens still, yeah.

I2: So can I ask a quick question? So since that time, in terms of your memory now, like is your short term memory affected or your long term memory affected?

SC: Erm, I seemingly have rebuilt it, always got a pad near me and refer to that. But you learn ways of catching catchments of what to keep if you know what I mean. Like I shall remember you visited me today but won't remember names and probably some of the, you know, the analysis, the questioning and so on, I won't remember. Which again, I keep paper references of what's happened, yeah. Yeah.

UP: How did you feel when you were diagnosed with the condition and in particular with the malpractice that ensued?

SC: Initially I think I was very--, I can't think of the right word, annihilated, because I was at that very numb sense of it all, where I woke up and the person that was awake wasn't me, if that analogy works. And more so when people did say what I used to do and, you know, not only family wise but work wise, that that ability seemed foreign to me because I didn't have the actual recollection or ability to do it again, you know. Very angry with the hospitals and the conditions that they inferred onto me, and more angry with their denial initially, it took seven years to do the case, so it took a long time. And in that time obviously babe was growing to, you know, toddler and school hood, as it were, and my daughter was six, so she was going through an important stage from school to teen start, so very difficult, yeah.

UP: And how did that make you feel generally?

SC: Erm, depressed, yes. I mean I was on a listing for being depressed 'cause of mood drops and things like that, and had a lot of help at that time. I was a member of the Crescent Resource Centre in New Malden, which sadly isn't here anymore, but I can safely now say that probably was a lifesaver to me at that time, because you meet other people and learn what they've been through and how they coped and you get sort of ways of dealing with mind thought and physical situations that you probably would never have thought of doing, you know. And just that being with a group that would understand and, you know, I understood them, they understood me in our conversations, you know, so that was good, yeah.

UP: Can you talk me through the legal process you went through?

SC: Yeah. It took about I think two years before the case started [coughs], sorry. And my ex wasn't very keen on it, he just wanted it, you know, that's it, you know, done. But I suppose a predetermination that may have been in me anyway came out, you know, and I thought no, someone's done something wrong and (a) you don't want it happening to someone else, (b) they've got to realise they've done it and (c) I want justice for what happened to me, you know. And I was advised through, again, a counselling service that we had at the Crescent Resource Centre of a medical group that do--, a law group that do medical cases and went to them and they just took it, you know. And through the years it took to actually get to the end I had to go through my own team's analysis of what was wrong with me now and what the difference was from then to now. And through the other side's analysis of everything too, so it was a lot of medical inputs, outputs and everything else, yeah. Yeah.

UP: What was it like trying to learn and relearn some of the skills you had prior to the incident?

SC: Primarily frustration, 'cause you knew you could do it but you couldn't [laughs]. And it was like simple things mostly, like the cooking and caring for children, you know, things like that, that were the main sort of Everest in my climb as it were. More on the business side it was I couldn't believe that that was me,

that I'd done what I'd been told I'd done, you know, and the career I had. Because you're living what you're in and you don't realise what was out there sort of thing, [that sort of term 00:13:19]. So it was very much as though I was at that time living two lives, the person I am and the person that people said I was, so yeah, it was very difficult combining it all, yeah.

UP: What disability services in Kingston did you have assist you?

SC: I had the counselling services and the care, you know, here, but my care and the incident happened at Epsom Hospital, so my medical care was still over at Epsom, yeah.

UP: Did you receive financial support?

SC: Through the borough gave me the ILS and the standard benefits that people get as well but, you know, the impairment and living and so on what I'd lost, yeah.

UP: How did this work?

SC: I think initially it did assist greatly, 'cause that impact where you don't have the freedom oh I need a bit of extra money, I'll get an extra job or whatever, you know, that impact. And also at the time I believe it restricted my husband's working ability 'cause there were two children, a disabled wife and everything, so his working cut down so he needed that input, you know, to help us maintain, you know, a life, not a standard life but a life, you know.

UP: That must have been very difficult for him?

SC: Yeah. Yeah, and--, well, we're divorced now but, you know, that--, all of that impacts on social as well as, you know, everything else that's connected, yeah.

I2: Sorry, can I just ask, you mentioned the Independent Living Scheme, how did you--, how were you made aware of that being an option for you?

SC: Again, through what were called social workers and--, social workers and the Crescent Resource Centre, 'cause they had all that on base at the time, there were people there that informed you. And then connections through KCIL. I forget, what was KCIL called before it, it wasn't initially KCIL, was it, it was something else but--,

I2: Yeah, Kingston Association of Disabled People--,

SC: Yeah, KDP, yeah

I2: Yeah, KDP.

SC: Through that then and then it all rolled through what was possible and available [inaudible 00:16:15], yeah.

UP: Can you describe a typical day with your personal assistant for me?

SC: Today as it were, a day now or when it first happened?

UP: When it first happened [inaudible 00:16:31].

SC: When it first happened, I was very--, again my term zombyish, 'cause there were people coming in helping, some family at times as well. And you had set hourage that you were allocated to use when, you

know, not when you could use it but when you chose to have it. So in the mornings I would have someone come in and help me get up, wash, dressed and so on, things like that. Otherwise it would've been left to husband who had the two children, you know, and that puts more impact. Initially I think I had a lunch time call as well 'cause I wasn't able to do that even, you know. So he--, they would come at a certain time and help me with lunch and so on. And then I think there was one more after that, but the late one my husband helped me with, like going to bed and so on, or my sister or someone came out to me.

I2: Do you receive--, do you have personal assistants now?

SC: Yeah.

I2: How does--, could you kind of talk us through that as well?

SC: Yeah, sure. I have four days a week a morning lady now come in, she does seven to eight thirty in the morning, and she's here 'cause in the bath I'm a bit risky, you know, with the unsteadiness. And she does breakfast or, you know, with the animals and things, does things like that. And then in the early evening I have someone comes in that helps me with the evening meal and that does some houseworky bits that I can't do now sort of thing, yeah.

I2: And are you in receipt of direct payments?

SC: No.

I2: No, oh okay.

SC: No, 'cause where I got the pay out, it was too much to carry on with the direct payments. So I still get benefits of severe disablement and another one--, the mobility one I think it is, in my allowance as it were, so that money is used now for the help I get, yeah.

I2: And do you still have input from KCIL?

SC: No, not directly, but obviously I--, well not obviously, but I do keep in touch with what's occurring. There was--, I mean again, I could be wrong so I'm not trying to [laughs]... But when I became more able the connection wasn't as good, the monthly meeting we used to have cut down and that was missed by a lot of people, especially they were held within like the Crescent or certain situations to get input from authority as well as the individuals, you know. And they do still happen but, you know, it's a different grouping I think with it all more, yeah.

UP: Can you tell me more about some of the difficulties of being a disabled parent and how it affected you and your immediate family?

SC: Yeah. The main one is again not that immediacy, like especially when they're younger, you know, they move like a rocket and I'm still sat down [laughs], you know, that sort of element. Or, you know, if they were crying and that I couldn't pick them up and things like that. When they went to school--, well my daughter was already at school, but my son when he started I wasn't as involved with that either, it was easier for my husband to do that directly. So you do feel a bit secluded from it 'cause of ease of the others that were doing it. And also with the children it's very--, it was more my daughter 'cause prior to my impairment I ran a mother and toddler group, a coffee morning for parents and, erm, there was another group but I can't remember what it was. And we used to go to a hall two or three days a week and run that, and I'd have like coffee mornings at the house and things where other children used to come. And she missed that a lot 'cause that group then disappeared a bit, you know, 'cause they couldn't deal with the Sheila they knew being the Sheila I am now, and--, or didn't understand it really I think, yeah. And, you know, it was hard for them to adjust to the differences. So that impact was hard and, you know, like if--, if

she said oh I want to go so and so or to a friend's I couldn't do it, I then had to arrange that for her, someone to do it for me. With Scott, mostly he was brought up by his father for safety, I had child help come in through--, what's the name of the nursery at the back by, erm, oh gosh, off King Charles Road there's a turning on your left and you go down, there was a little nursery place there for mothers. And they, when he was about 18 months or so, started groups for disabled which I became part of. And that was good 'cause it got me and him out of the house together without family dominating what I was doing with him, sort of thing. And they helped with that sort of element so I could the--, well not ridiculous, the needed things like nappy changing and that but on my own rather than oh I'll do it, it's quicker, you know, sort of thing, so it was that vein. And that formed [a better unity 00:23:36] with my son then I think, yeah. I think they're understanding now, my daughter, she's 33 and she's got two boys of her own, she still I feel has that resentment of what happened to me, because it altered her life and her freedom of what, you know, we had. My son having only known me like this it's a little bit easier although the frustrations are still there, you know, but not quite the harshness that it is from the older one, yeah.

I2: Does your daughter remember what--, you before?

SC: Yeah.

I2: Yeah, okay.

SC: Yeah, she was six I think when it happened, so she had that oh we used to do this, we used to drive--, 'cause I drove as well which I can't do now. We used to go over to nan's or, you know, do this, do that, we'd go somewhere and it stopped, yes, yeah.

UP: That must have affected her a lot?

SC: Yeah, very much. And at that age too, as much as they have some awareness it's not an understanding, it's just what they see around, you know. And obviously where people were coming to help she did--, she only saw per se strangers coming into the house, doing something with mum that she couldn't, you know, be part of and so on. So yeah, there were lots of barriers that were unwittingly formed I think as it were, yeah.

I2: You were saying that you--, you found it hard to sort of comprehend that you'd had this career beforehand--,

SC: Mmm.

I2: At what point did you sort of make a decision that you wanted to--, to go back into work, was that sort of once they were at school or...?

SC: Erm, I think I--, or as far as I'm aware and again have been told, even when they were in early childhood my husband had his own sort of business so I did his bookwork, so that sort of thing was still being used, you know. And like while my daughter was at school the parent teacher groups that I facilitated and helped with as well, so it was an ongoing thing, you know. But since becoming impaired the only--, not work, it was more just wanting to do--, within the Crescent and so on I became chair of the members' committee and that was my work ethic in that role, as it were. And that helped a great deal 'cause the bits of the brain that had the 'I can fight for you to do that' for someone else came out more, you know, and grew a bit more in my character again, which was good, yeah.

UP: Can you tell me more about your role at the Crescent Resource Centre in New Malden?

SC: Yeah. When they first joined it I didn't want to go, I was sort of wheeled in by the social worker and my ex and I thought it's an institution [laughs]. And, you know, the old films that you see where, you know,

the walls and the shut doors [laughs], [inaudible 00:27:41] straitjacket's not needed yet. But once I did join and realised that everybody in there was as human as I was sort of thing [laughs], you know, which again showed perhaps my degree of ignorance prior to becoming impaired, although I'm told I did have disabled workers in my departments but you forget all-- , well I forgot it anyway 'cause of the condition. But you met people and learnt about their lives and what they used to do before the impact of an impairment. I thought no, you know, and some that were born with it were worse off unfortunately than we were, you know. There was one lady I met and I had a very strong friendship with, her name was Julia, and she was born disabled, I've forgotten what her impairment was, but she was in a wheelchair. And she was one of these that was perhaps institutionalised from birth and eventually came out of that and was living a semi independent life at Fiddlers Green-- , do you know Fiddlers Green? It is a residency in Surbiton, er, I think that might now be closed, I'm not sure. And she was a wonderful character, really was, and we became good friends. And you heard her background and story and you thought crikey, how, you know. And my children, you know, introduced them and took them round to her when I could and, you know, their awareness obviously benefited from it but hers too because as she put it, she was being treated as normal again, you know, or normal per se 'cause she never had that normality-- , I hate that word but I'm using it a lot, where she was treated as the woman she was rather than the impairment, yeah.

I2: How-- , sorry, how did you then go on to-- , was it chair that you said that [you were 00:30:15]?

SC: Yeah, I chaired the members' committee.

I2: Yeah, how did that come about?

SC: I was asked by the manager to be part of the committee 'cause, as I'm sure you're aware, getting volunteers to do anything is like drawing teeth at times [laughs]. And I went onto that and did some of the bookwork again, and secretarial Minute keeping and stuff. And then the current leader at the time left the centre and I was asked to take it on and we-- , so I had more involvement with the Guildhall and people that officiated the services at the time and had lots of meetings with them shall we say [laughs], and called them into our meetings so they knew what we were thinking as well, yeah. And that developed more and more, you know, with the national sort of, erm, lost the word, but units that facilitates benefits for disabled or information groups for disabled people and so on, like KCIL, and gives them the assistance or where to get assistance and things like that. There are still-- , I mean again, a lot of the social work, benefit side-- , and again I don't like that benefit side word because it should be something given to someone that is in that position anyway, because the floundering that happens in between is too great and a lot of people suffer too much from it. So yeah, a lot more is needed in a more forthright way on it, yeah.

I2: What were the main services that the Resources Centre provided?

SC: Well obviously day care for those that had it, they did educational and like cookery and relearning computer work and things like that. The committee organised the coffee bar in there, so those that had that interest, and we had at least three, I think, men in my time who ran that and, you know, that was their little business at it were [laughs], you know, and had the background to do it, and they also developed from being able to do that. Erm, social groups where we used to go on day trips and things like that, into the world again, you know. And that was a major thing, there's a lot of people look at that oh they're out again, you know, it's not because from being a walking person to being in a wheelchair, knowing you can go to these places you would've just oh let's just go to the Tower of London or go to the pub even, you know, you would do ad hoc, whereas when you're in a chair, are they accessible, are they this, are they friendly even, all that element. They gave us a chance to learn in our friend groups that became so that we could have the backbone to do it on our own then, you know, which was good, yeah.

UP: What were your thoughts when you met other disabled adults in the centre?

SC: Again, initially frightened isn't--, nervous, because knowing your own condition you know what is weaker or stronger and what hurts and what doesn't, you know, mentally as well as physically. So you are tentative initially of conversations, you know, and you sort of say oh hello, I'm Sheila, who are you sort of thing. And then you develop it from there, you know, and you start talking either about conditions or about what they used to do or what they're hoping to do, you know. And you learn different ways of dealing or doing it, you know. There were some there that--, I don't know if the names Tessa and Graham Pole ring a bell?

I2: Hmm-hmm.

SC: The famed couple of the Crescent [laughs]. Wonderful, wonderful couple, both disabled from childhood, used to run riot in the High Street in New Malden with their wheelchairs demolishing shop fixtures, fittings and displays everywhere they went [laughs]. But they just went, you know, and did it and you sort of looked on them and thought well crikey, you know. And you laughed with them and they laughed at themselves and that passes on, you know, with it all. And again, being--, I was one of the younger ones there with young children and bringing the children in at times was nice because Tessa and Graham were older but didn't have children and, you know, Julia didn't have children either, that mixture was good, you know, with it all, and for them and the children, you know. So yeah, it's that mixing and you break down those barriers, but I think initially having that group ethic with it in a safe environment to build up to doing it elsewhere, yeah.

UP: How did you feel?

SC: Erm, initially I felt I'm never going to be able to do things again, but gradually I, yeah I can, and if someone's not going to let me they're going to hear the argument why I am going to do it, you know, that-- , it built up like that. Whereas, you know, still today I want to go out with a sight impaired friend, going into certain cafés or bars or restaurants, the amount of checking you still have to do. Can you fit a wheelchair, is there visibly impaired aspects that help, you know, and all of that, it amazes me that it's still needed in a lot of areas and where businesses still shuts doors to that way of thinking, you know, it's dreadful that it's still occurring, yeah.

I2: How long were you using the Crescent for between when you first accessed it and when it [closed 00:37:46]?

SC: Er, it was '73 I joined-- , '73, hark at me, '93 I joined it, '73 I was still at work. In '93 I joined it and I was there until it closed, yeah, and I can't remember that-- , how long ago that was, it must be seven years now. 'Cause we went then from a younger people's disabled facility to join Newent House in Surbiton, which was older people's day centre and residential, and that was an awkward thing because an older people's establishment is run differently to a younger people's. So there was again, a bit of trying to intermingle was hard and a lot of the younger ones sadly didn't carry on and I know at least two or three cases where they've stayed home and became quite despondent of that loss and not having the actual amenities available to them in the way they'd had it before. And then Newent closed and we went to Raleigh, and even more broke down then, you know, 'cause the two facilities where we had committees and a member input to what was happening within the organisation wasn't done as well within the older age group. Newent wasn't too bad, we eventually sort of brought that up a bit more, but Raleigh is a different thing altogether [laughs].

I2: Is that somewhere that you still access today?

SC: I go one day a week now, but not as even-- , I used to do a committee there but that got-- , I use it, torn apart. And when I do go in on a Monday some of the [folk 00:40:06], you know, who can still come up to me and say oh Sheila, what about, you know. Or we'll sit in a group and have a chat sort of thing, but it's not the same, it's a business run organisation which it wasn't in the others [laughs].

UP: What were the reasons for closing the Crescent?

SC: Funding from the borough and parliament, yeah, yeah. It was looked on, and still hackles go up, that day care facilities [inaudible 00:40:46] weren't needed. If people were getting independent living scheme monies they should be living on an independent vein outside of centre regime. And I know within groups there are people that are, you know, are very against Crescent and Causeway and everything else like that without seeing the benefits of it, look on it still as the institution rather than a social as well instructional group thing, yeah.

UP: How did the service users react to the closure?

SC: Many went--, well, most of us went into severe upset and depression, it was like tearing limbs off of us. Where it was sited--, [talking 00:41:51] Crescent and I know there have been many others, but the Crescent was within a main high street location, we had the shops, post office, banks, anything up there, coffee bars, pubs, you know, everything in that high street. If we couldn't manage to walk up or wheel ourselves up there ourselves, we had staff that could assist us, we had within it, you know, so as I say, the retraining on cooking, computers, everything within the environment and it was ripped out. It was like taking the heart out of our group totally. And still people I know that used to go there, we talk about it all the time, what we used to do and we don't do now, yeah.

I2: Were any sort of campaigns [posted 00:42:56]?

SC: Yes [laughs].

I2: Can you tell us about that?

SC: Petition upon petition upon thousands and thousands of signatures to Guildhall. My view on councillors--, councillors isn't good anyway. Meetings within Guildhall as well as within the centre site, even writing to Number Ten and the Parliamentary basis, having meetings with hierarchy of that realm, never the top ones but, you know, hierarchy of it. Going to the Guildhall, there were protests as well there but protests within the centre as well. Trying to get each of the parties of the political vein borough base to come in and talk to us about it, and in the--, prior to this [election's election 00:44:04] I had one candidate knock on my door, he didn't come back [laughs]. In fact by email 'cause, you know, I brought up the issues and so on, and he stood there I think fairly aghast at what I was saying--, oh well that wasn't us. And I said no one admits to who it was and until I know who's pushed the button I don't want to know what you're planning on saying to me, you know. So we had a couple of emails through it but, you know, that--, and again, it's that falsehood from people of that vein that I hate, where yeah, I mean like in the local and general ones now, they're bringing up about we're going to provide this, do that and make it all seventh heaven. They're not, they are restricted by the budgets and my business bit comes in with that, I know we've all got limits but when they promise facilities and things that they've ripped apart and ruined again and reinvesting that money into what could've been used prior to to just improve what was there, give away, they're not going to do it, yeah [laughs].

UP: What do you hope to see happen in the future to continue supporting disabled people to better manage the activities of [their limit 00:45:43]?

SC: If I was on a drug high [laughs], which--, my drug high answer is to have facilities like those centres again, run by good staff, good policy and councils and people using it as well. So a unified group, and I've forgotten, is it Putney there's one, I've forgotten what it's called, is it the Greenham Centre or something like that. But where there's a base where people can go to where they can relax and feel they're walking into a minefield, where they can get information, assistance, get what's needed; help for them, family and every association of their lives that's knocked on. An all round sort of environment that can make them

feel confident in their own space and to be part of it all, rather than being the chess piece moved in it all, yeah.

I2: What do you think are the main challenges at the moment in terms of provision, particularly within Kingston?

SC: There isn't provision in Kingston any more, I'm sorry, there's KCIL I agree, but KCIL to a degree also went on more to than mental and, erm, what was the other side, erm, was it called [alien 00:47:26] integration or something like that? There was--, there was a phase of that element, and other elements slipped down a lot of the scale. And with--, well on physical as well as partly the mental side as well with the thing that happened to me, that contact basis went away and you felt that you had to be part of a very smaller group to be helped, as it were, rather than a general analysis and combination [resource 00:48:11] grouping. Like when I again spoke to the local chap that came round government wise, he wasn't even aware of the facilities that were around and I said well that says it all, there aren't [laughs]. So yeah, there's a drought of what's available I feel now, yeah.

UP: Would you say that your disability made you a stronger person?

SC: Not really knowing myself before, I think gradually it has made me stronger 'cause you're fighting more on, again, everyday issues as well as major issues that you need to be stronger for. So yeah, in an all round perspective where I would've let perhaps things slip a bit in other elements of an able person's life, I fight more for it all the time, yeah.

I2: Yeah, I definitely think you are very inspiring [inaudible 00:49:34] [laughs]--,

SC: [Laughs]. Oh, thank you. I mean, you know, I've been fortunate to meet a lot of inspiring people that have had to deal with a lot more so, you know. And that's what I say, you do learn from others, you know, that strength and bite the bullet as they used to say, or just be obstinate [laughs], you know, at times when you need to be, yeah. Yeah.

UP: Is there anything else you would like to mention that we haven't asked you?

SC: No, I think it is more on a general [prognosis 00:50:12] as it were, that it--, the basic element of provision around a person's life when they are born into an impairment or mentally or physically, or whether they gain it through life, I think more has been washed aside on it because some are stronger and some aren't. And those with the stronger voice sometimes have not an all round perspective on impairments and I think that lack of awareness it seems to date has increased more than it was in the '90s through, when I first joined when it was increasing and you felt you were being heard and things were being done to achieve. Now you feel no, it's not important, it's not important and getting pushed back and back. A Mayoral car is probably more needed than any investment in borough plans, you know, that element and that's what gets your hackles up for fighting for it, the justice of it all, yeah.

I2: What would you say is your sort of proudest achievement since becoming disabled?

SC: I think proudest on a social vein are my two children, the way they've grown up. Erm, proudest on the other side is having met the wonderful people I have met with impairments and the laughs and jokes and achievements we've had in that time too, for them, for me and for others following us in a short space of time, that's diminished a bit more now. But that, yeah, I mean I'm proud of what we as our committee did within the Crescent and within that committee we were all impaired but each of us had previous skills and trades or confidences in things which one--, one chap was a cook and he used to do meals with people within the centre, it was, you know, that enjoyment vein of living rather than the struggle vein of living, yeah.

I2: What else do you hope to achieve, have you got any sort of ambitions?

SC: I would like--, in the cloud euphoria take over parliament and rule the world for us all [laughs], you know. But no, to have that increasing and re-increased because, as I say, I think it has been whitewashed again, a lot more in the last ten years definitely, within our world we live in. And to look at the simpler ways of achieving it rather than the vast ways of achieving it. 'Cause on the simple steps you build ladders and that, you know, is what you need to do to make it sustainable sort of thing, yeah.

I2: Okay. That's so interesting, thank you so much for that. I just wanted to just, er, I just made a note. Yeah, what year was your son born and what year was it that you--,

SC: 1990.

I2: Okay, and that was the year that you sort of see as the point in which you became disabled?

SC: Yeah, 'cause I became--, he was born in August so I must've become pregnant in January and the sickness that was [inaudible 00:54:27] March, I was hospitalised initially in the March I think. Was in there for two months, came out I April, May--, May, June, woke up at home fully and was re-hospitalised and, yeah. Yeah.

I2: Okay. So--, and, erm, so that was only a few weeks I suppose before you then had your son?

SC: Yeah, he was born in August so I didn't have time between that true awakening which as I say, I think was June--, the Julyish time, of realising the house, the people and that were my house and people in my life sort of thing, yeah.

I2: Yeah. So difficult to comprehend what that must've been like--,

SC: Yeah.

I2: But yeah, you speak so positively about it though, which is really...

SC: Well, I mean [inaudible 00:55:32] a straitjacket out of the corner. But I think it is great to have happened too, I get frustrated it's happened because I do look at what would I be doing now if it hadn't, I'd have been an able, probably in business, two grown up children, grandchildren, doing the driving to, from, and freedom to do that. Whereas now, if I think I want to see my grandson in his school play, you know, it's hard for the daughter to come and get me or hard for me to go to the school because it may not be as easy, you know, and things like that. Those sort of things, and it's that balance, just try and get an even keel on it, yeah.

I2: Absolutely. Thank you so much.

SC: Pleasure.

I2: Do either of you have any further questions?

UP: No.

I2: No? Thank you. We can stop there then, do you want to stop...

[END OF RECORDING – 00:56:48]