

Pauline Stapleton: Supporting the Community (Transcript)

Pauline Stapleton: No matter where in the world you go to live, you need your history. I know I'm from St Vincent, St Albans is home.

When I first came here as a child, came from sunshine, I was not expecting what I saw which was the gloom, the dull, a fog, cold and the chimney pots with all this smoke coming out the chimney and I was getting worried because I thought the buildings were on fire.

The first time I ever saw snow, I was in school – I've never forgotten that day. I never got- and all the kids in the class, white and black, were teasing 'you've never seen snow'. I said, 'what is it?'. I was actually scared of it because I'd never seen it and I remember sitting in the classroom, looking out the window and this stuff start falling down and I'm thinking this is-that's snow; and the kids were putting their hands window, collecting it and kind of like bringing it to me and I was kind of like, well eventually I had no choice, I had to walk home in it.

I did enjoy growing up in St Albans because everybody mixed and everybody knew each other and when we went to other places, they weren't the same; but we were. It was just a community that we were all in. We just made it that we didn't know any different. Everybody comes round, if somebody's out and they haven't got no Christmas dinner, they ring my dad's door, they come we say 'come round, come in'. If you haven't got seat just sit anywhere, sit on the floor, sit on the settee, sit anywhere you don't have to sit with a knife and fork. As long as you're all there, and you're all eating. No one is left out.

And we had little parties; music, dancing, drinking. When there was an outing going anywhere, we were all going. If the church was having something, we were all there. It was like home from home.

[singing] "when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I, that is higher than I."

We have a lor of, um, different cultures, a lot of different people meeting up which is very very nice and my role in the club; I'm the cook. I have to cook and know their, um, dietary habits and making sure they get something sensible to eat and making sure everyone is heard and seen.

Shop on a Wednesday, prep on a Thursday, and provide a meal, a hot meal on a Friday.

[talking to friend]

Pauline: look look look

Friend: oh my god, a grater

Pauline and Friend 2: yeah, back home

Friend: how much is it?

Pauline: £6.99—7 quid

Friend: that's not bad really. Oh my god, that is fantastic

Pauline: You need a community in St Albans because we need some of our children because some of them are lost, they don't know where they're from. They don't know anything about their background. We have the elderly people that are now, what, shut up indoors in their little homes and then they don't have visitors. Some of them lost all their family and they're there and day to day they don't get to meet up with people.

[Pauline talking to fishmonger]

Pauline: Hi—hi, how are you today, not too bad

I like, I like, and you've seen lots and lots of people, you know and everybody getting together. And what it is because where I am cooking, me and my other two workers, we're in the kitchen and sometimes we only hear that people are there and when you go out to give them their meal, everybody is there. So again, you know, it becomes the community's out.

[chattering]

I think its important that people know our story because when the people today look at us and look at what we've done and what we've achieved and what – they just believe that we just had it easy, we didn't. We need to keep our elderly people covered, we need to keep the children covered, we need to keep the churches together. Like they said, it's not one person or two people who bring up a child, it's the whole community, because everybody nurtures.

[music]