

## Audio file

[119074-LoveandLossThePandemic.mp3](#)

## Transcript

Speaker 1

How many photos have you got? About 2,500. About 1% of the number of people that we know have died. So for every single face that you see, that would be 100 people. Wow.

Speaker 2

It's painful to see the scale of it. I just think, how has this possibly happened?

Speaker 1

It's hard to believe just how many people died of COVID-19 in the pandemic. My mum was one of them. It was the biggest loss of life in our country since World War II. The public inquiry into COVID-19 got underway in earnest today. The inquiry is expected to continue for several years, looking at many aspects of a virus linked to more than 220,000 U.K.

Speaker 3

Deaths.

Speaker 1

In essence, Were we ready? If not, why not? What can be done to ensure that next time we are far better prepared? It is not if another pandemic will hit us, but when. In the hope that we learn from all the lives we've lost, I joined a group of other bereaved families that campaigned for this public inquiry.

Speaker 4

I'm here to remind everybody of the human cost that we paid as bereaved people. Maybe this is the moment to say how sorry I am to the relatives who lost their families.

Speaker 5

It wasn't just the deaths, it was the way they died.

Speaker 1

The pandemic touched us all, but for the people I've met who lost loved ones, so many of their stories have gone untold.

Speaker 6

It's important that we keep our loved ones' memories alive.

Speaker 1

Their lives mattered.

Speaker 7

One of the hardest parts about COVID was the feeling of helplessness and having to watch on from a distance. The worst came true.

Speaker 8

You just don't think things like that can happen to you.

Speaker 1

But it feels like we're in a rush to forget and move on.

Speaker 3

People say life is back to normal. and my life will never, ever be normal again.

Speaker 9

Each one of those numbers is actually a person with a name. It wasn't just the old, it wasn't just the sick, it was all ages, it was all races, it was everybody.

Speaker 1

I wanted to make a film to tell their stories. Who were the people we lost and how has their loss changed all of us left behind?

Speaker 4

In China, the new coronavirus is at clear and present danger.

Speaker 10

I honestly thought that shouldn't affect us here. They'll control it before it ever gets that distance.

Speaker 4

Here in the UK, the risk to individuals is incredibly low.

Speaker 9

Looking at the world for a pair of British spectacles, I just thought, if it does happen here, we've got it.

Speaker 11

We have a clear four-part plan to respond to the outbreak of this disease. Contain, delay, research and mitigate. We're taking all necessary measures to minimise the risk to the public.

Speaker 3

The outbreak spread to Italy, which now has the largest number of cases in Europe.

Speaker 12

It was only when it started reaching Europe then I began to realise this is serious. And then I thought, wow, is this going to hit us?

Speaker 13

Our country remains extremely well prepared. I want to stress we should be going about our business as usual.

Speaker 11

Italy, all of it, is now under the most severe restrictions since the Second World War.

Speaker 8

Richard was sitting here and I was watching the news and stuff with them, oh my God, look at them poor people dying, all the body bags, never dreaming that he was going to be in one the few weeks after. That's my little shrine.

Speaker 1

Are you religious now?

Speaker 8

Yeah, I am. Yeah.

Speaker 14

And was Richie?

Speaker 8

He wasn't a change-goer. Well, he had his beliefs. He used to pray when he wanted Liverpool to win the Cup.

Speaker 1

I remember the day Liverpool played Atletico Madrid at home in the Champions League. It was the same day that the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

Speaker 12

With my dad, Liverpool was his passion, his life. So there was no stopping him that night going the game.

Speaker 1

Tell us a bit more about it.

Speaker 12

There was 3000 Atletico Madrid fans that were allowed into the city. Spain was highly infected at the time. Probably one of the highest in Europe.

Speaker 8

It wasn't just them coming to the game. They were in town, they were in restaurants, they were in bars.

Speaker 1

Were you worried about Ritchie?

Speaker 8

When you're such a devoted fan and you're loved. Your football club, you might be a little bit reluctant. Well, it must be fine. The government said it's fine. So off he went.

Speaker 12

Even as a child, I'd done this walk from his house right through to Anfield Road. So it is quite emotional. If you're walking past somebody who's got the virus, you don't even have to touch them. They were singing, they were shouting. The expression that I always have is like throwing a stone into a pond and the disease just spreads. My dad was my dad, but he was more of a best mate to me than a dad.

Speaker 8

That was a scouser. You didn't want millions. He just wanted a nice little life. Do anything for you. He'd have a little moan now. I'm going to tell you.

Speaker 12

Terrible. He'd moan about anything. He'd be quiet, wouldn't he? He'd be quiet and then he'd be thinking about something to moan.

Speaker 1

How long were you married to Richie for?

Speaker 8

We would have been married 50 years in the August, but we never made it. Because what happened? There he is.

Speaker 12

Yeah, Jesus.

Speaker 8

Magnum.

Speaker 12

Certainly didn't go to the gym then, did he?

Speaker 8

No, he didn't.

Speaker 12

I don't think he did. Wow. And he loves you.

Speaker 8

He loves holidays. Yeah. We were always all inclusive. And he used to meet people and go, are you all inclusive? And they go, no. If you've got to pay for your own drink, what you want to drink, and then go and get them all drinks. Oh, honest to God, they all loved them. They all used to hate to see them go. They had to pay them.

Speaker 12

Exactly.

Speaker 8

Oh, well. Those were the days. They're gone, but your memories will stay forever.

Speaker 12

Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1

Louis, hello! How are you? When I started to make this film, I met lots of people who had loved ones in care homes at the beginning of the pandemic. You saw your dad's photograph up there? Oh, is it up? Yes, so. Thank you very much. I'll see you in a while.

My mum, Kath, was 84 and was also in a care home. And at that time, I was worried about what might happen to her.

Speaker 4

The government's chief scientific advisor has been explaining the latest measures to try to slow the spread of coronavirus. From today, people with a new persistent cough or high temperature are being told to stay in isolation for seven days.

Speaker 11

The older and vulnerable population are the ones who stand the biggest chance of getting the serious disease from this.

Speaker 9

My granddad was very much my kind of father figure. See, I didn't really like to have a dad growing up because he died when I was 6. So my granddad just had this huge influence on, like, how I saw the world. I dress and embody the kind of 1940s and 30s image. Who doesn't like polka dots? Look at them. I've definitely got a sense of humour from him, but also, like, I've got a work ethic.

Speaker 1

What would he say to you?

Speaker 9

As soon as I hit 16, it was go and get a job. And if you don't get a job, then I'm not going to talk to you.

Speaker 4

All right. Yeah.

Speaker 9

What? Early in the morning. Early in the morning.

Speaker 4

Early in the morning. Early in the morning. Let's get up and do some work.

Speaker 1

Love your granddad already.

Speaker 9

Here he is, for no reason at all, pretending to be a motorbike. At this point, he was in a care home. And when it came to COVID, my granddad was actually quite scared of it.

And he was a guy that would usually fob things off. It's a load of rubbish or that kind of thing. It was me saying, like, you know, no, it's nothing. I didn't take it seriously at all. I remember, like, seeing people wearing masks, and I remember thinking, that's ridiculous. Like, you know, what are they doing? But as soon as, like, I heard about herd immunity, that's when things started to twist. I started to see that if anything was going to happen, it would be him that was left behind, I assumed that when this whole thing started, the first port of call would be the care homes. like, brick them off, whatever you've got to do, like, they're the most vulnerable.

Speaker 1

I was really, really scared for my mum.

Speaker 9

Well, the sad truth is that you've a right to be scared for her. It was just a lottery.

Speaker 1

I remember in the middle of March thinking that we might lock down soon and this might be my last chance to see my mum. We'd always been really close. The times that I treasure are our trips away together, especially our last one on the Northumberland coast. It wasn't long after that trip that my mum developed Alzheimer's and moved into her care home in Durham.

Speaker 4

I'm personally surprised that we're still allowing external visits to care homes. Today's guidance says people shouldn't visit if they have flu-like symptoms.

Speaker 1

But when I arrived in Durham, the doors to my mum's care home were locked. They'd made the decision to protect everyone, rather than wait for official guidance. All I could do was wade through the window. Mum couldn't understand why I was outside. It was hard to walk away, not knowing when I might see her again. The Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, has just said that 53 people in the UK have died after contracting the virus. The first deaths reported were mostly of the old and vulnerable. But some families would soon discover how indiscriminate the virus could be.

Speaker 15

We can move that one in the middle and then put the other one down the bottom here.

Speaker 16

I'm amazed that actually fits.

Speaker 15

Pop this one back up. It's what I call a living wall. It changes. It's just nice to see different expressions of Chloe. It just keeps all the memory alive. We never had a family photograph always together, because you imagine you didn't think you're going to lose somebody that young.

Speaker 1

So what was Chloe like?

Speaker 15

Absolute character. She'd be that person if you walk into a party and Chloe going in and everybody go, whoa, Chloe's here, because she'd make everybody laugh.

Speaker 16

She was the loudest.

Speaker 15

Smallest, most petite, but the loudest voice, without a doubt.

Speaker 16

She always worked as well. From 15, she was working.

Speaker 15

Oh, yes. She started to work in a care home. She actually loved it.

Speaker 16

She just loved going to work.

Speaker 15

She wanted the elderly to have the best quality of life they could have. That's what made her so passionate, I think.

Speaker 1

That's what my mum's carers were like. They loved their job.

Speaker 16

She just seemed happy when she was caring for people.

Speaker 1

So was she worried?

Speaker 16

No, she wasn't, was she?

Speaker 15

But we hadn't heard of anyone catching it at that time. We just heard through the grapevine it was like catching the flu. We didn't think it was really anything massively to worry about. When Chloe came home from work with a high temperature, we presumed, we didn't actually know because there was no test kits then, that she had coronavirus.

Speaker 16

She got really bad and she asked us all if she was going to die. And we all said, don't be so silly, Chloe. You know, you're young, no one's died of it your age, you'll be fine. Go to bed, take your painkillers, drink plenty of water, you'll be fine.

Speaker 15

Went downhill pretty fast now on. Obviously did phone for the ambulance a couple of times.

Speaker 16

Paramedics said, no, you're 21. People your age aren't dying of the virus. And I think that reassured her a little bit. And it made me feel better because I thought, well, somebody knows what they're on about, has told her she's going to be fine. And I think she passed away that night, didn't she? And it just hit so quick, five days.

Speaker 15

That's the last thing you'd think it'd happen to a 21-year-old. At that time, I think she was the youngest person to pass of COVID without any underlying health conditions.

Speaker 11

Tonight, a stark warning from the Prime Minister.

Speaker 4

The NHS is at real risk of being overwhelmed by the coronavirus.

Speaker 13

From this evening, I must give the British people a very simple instruction. You must stay at home.

Speaker 12

You've got a prime minister telling you that you've got to stay in. It's a really, really weird situation, a really strange feeling.

Speaker 17

Both Bob and I did think it was a good thing to do. I know a lot of people didn't, but we felt that it was sensible.

Speaker 5

It was all so surreal. I don't think any of us had ever thought about a pandemic or had ever thought about what a pandemic would mean for us.

Speaker 13

I urge you, at this moment of national emergency, to stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives.

Speaker 7

I remember how stringent a lockdown it was because it was like, you can't meet up with anyone. You can only leave your house once a day.

Speaker 18

It was surreal. It almost feels like a bad dream happened. You know, it didn't actually feel like we lived through it.

Speaker 1

While most of us stayed at home, there were millions of our key workers who kept the country going.

Speaker 19

My dad was a bus driver in the pandemic, and he did it for the nation to keep London moving. My dad came to the UK during the '70s. He came from the Philippines. He was still a teenager. He loved the whole culture. He loved the traditional fish and chips. Proper British, my dad was. I mean, he would spend the whole night watching English comedy. Only fools and horses, and he would be laughing his head off. Nice and cool, son. Nice and cool, you know what I mean? And he played snooker. Like, he loved the sport. He would fit snooker any time of the day, whether it's in the morning, his lunch breaks, or...

Speaker 16

Even after work.

Speaker 19

Even after work.

Speaker 16

Me and my mum would give lunch to Dad at the bus stop, or we'd go on his last shift and get on his bus.

Speaker 19

He would tell me to sit on the top deck, appreciate the views of London.

Speaker 16

I remember hearing, back in the day when it had cash, he had to put it into the machines. I remember just to hear it clang, clang, clang. I was like, dad, you've got so much money.

Speaker 19

And then he would take me to the snooker after. So it was just a fun day as a young child.

Speaker 16

That was close.

Speaker 10

I've missed it, but he would not miss it because he was that good. We made a very good pair as doubles partners.

Speaker 19

He was tied to the hip.

Speaker 10

We were very, very close. I loved him to bits. I loved him to bits.

Speaker 1

Trini, were you worried about driving the buses?

Speaker 10

I wasn't on the job at the time when the pandemic started, because I retired by then. I did worry about the guys on the job.

Speaker 16

We were worried about him, but he always assured us, saying, we follow the guidelines, surely we should be safe.

Speaker 19

What was it like in the garage?

Speaker 10

The loss of a brother, a colleague and a loved one was very hard for everyone to take in. People were scared of coming to work.

Speaker 19

Fear and trepidation for everyone. Everyone panicked, thinking, who's going to be next? It was a very confusing, traumatic experience for all of us, I think. We're still in shock to this day.

Speaker 10

It really hit me heart. I cried for a couple of days.

Speaker 12

I dreamt of him.

Speaker 10

And yeah, it was part of my family. It still hurts me. It still hurts. All right, it's all right, it's all right.

Speaker 18

The first lockdown, I think it was, like, fun then. You know, it was time off work and time off university, and the baked banana bread, and, you know, it was-- it was fun. Spy next door. Here we go.

Speaker 4

To the side, time today! Come on.

Speaker 17

Whoo! Whoo! I remember feeling a tremendous sense of pride. It was a real indomitable British gung-ho spirit. I thought, you know what? People complain about this country. Why not such a bad lot?

Speaker 5

It was nice being at home. Spend time outside in the sunshine. I was all spending time together, trying to do fun things. cooking, baking. Homeschooling was not nice. I think that broke every parent in Britain. Life should not feel normal for you right now. At all times, follow the advice on washing your hands, using tissues and not touching your face.

Speaker 6

It was a dad shot. My husband Mark was a key worker. He worked in a factory knitting soap. Mark and I purchased this home in 1997. It was the year we actually got married. And Ebony and Hope came in millennium, so they're millennium babies, so three years after we moved in. And then it was a bit of a surprise in 2001. Surprise shock. So, this is Mark. This is my life-size cardboard cutout of my husband. Hi, Mark. This is his wee tacky boat, which we put on for our wedding anniversary. Hi, Mark.

Speaker 20

I think it was one of our presents and we bought it and we were so nervous because we didn't know how she was going to react to like seeing his face again because we were quite shocked when we got it and we put it up and it's so like lifelike.

Speaker 6

I mean, I absolutely love it. It's just a huge part of our everyday life.

Speaker 20

I think it's a reflection on Dad because he was the Joker, but it would make him laugh, like, and I think that makes him, like, his personality still here. He would just always be so, like, jokey, like, it just made us laugh all the time.

Speaker 2

A party guy, like, we used to love it, just... Getting up and dancing.

Speaker 20

I do have fond memories of him doing the dad dancing in front of my friends, though, and I was like, Thanks, that was so cool.

Speaker 6

Just 2 Mac boys. It was always fun. He was just so free.

Speaker 2

Just loved his life. He was just happy to be here.

Speaker 6

Mark had underlying conditions. So Mark actually was extremely worried about the virus. When we were watching it on the television, there was just this fear.

Speaker 19

The number who have passed away now totals 1,789.

Speaker 1

Despite the lockdown, the growing numbers of deaths announced daily is something many of us will never forget.

Speaker 11

2,352 have died. 3,605 people have sadly died.

Speaker 14

Me and Arima always worked together. When she was a healthcare, I was a healthcare. And then when she became a nurse, I was a healthcare on the very same ward. When me and my sister heard that the COVID has come in the UK, she sat down and said, We're going to be like soldiers. I said, what are you on about? She said, you know how soldiers go to war? We're going to be in the war like in the NHS. And I laughed it off. I was like, yeah, but it's not going to come here. Like, they're just saying it. She said, no, he's going to come here and we're going to be used as soldiers at the front line and we can't be scared. And so we can't work. We have to work. And what was it like at the ward? I remember we were both on night shift and when we had a first patient who had COVID. We looked at each other thinking, OK, what do we do? There was no PPE. We just had like the normal aprons that they have on the ward. I got a bit scared. They were talking about something very deadly. And now we've got her in our hospital. Just tell us about your sister. You were honestly very close. Me and Rima were raised and brought up in Walsall. And we went to the same school, so there's about three years difference. And we got married together on the same day, two brothers. Namra is the oldest daughter of mine, and so Reem helped me with everything because I panicked when I had her because I was so young.

Speaker 18

She was like my second mother. She used to drop me off school, pack my lunchboxes. It was always catering to become a nurse.

Speaker 14

It's kind of hard for Asian families, two girls, to go to university. But for our families, it was no one, no one has done it. We were still screaming, shouting and everything, like, you know, our aunties made it.

Speaker 18

I was so happy for her.

Speaker 14

Before, she hates pictures, but when she knew she's got the uniform, okay. I'm ready for the picture. Every other day, she said, how do I look? And I said, the same as yesterday. She said, no, do you think I look professional? Do you think I match my role? And I said,

what is wrong with you? Like, it's just a uniform. And she'd tell me, oh, it's not just a uniform, mom. It's a dream.

Speaker 11

In the last 24 hours, two nurses tragically died fighting coronavirus. For the NHS, this truly is the front line.

Speaker 14

This is the very hospital. This is the same hospital we were born in, had her kids, she worked here, and then she died here. Arima was one of the first NHS nurses to die from COVID. Arima turned 36 the month she died. It was very hard, like, why Arima? Why? She's young.

Speaker 5

I remember my whole street clapping for the NHS and standing on our doors and banging pans.

Speaker 17

I can't imagine what the hard-working doctors and nurses, what they've had to go through. And I wanted to thank them for their sacrifice.

Speaker 3

Everybody felt it for the NHS staff. we were out there banging our pants and I was proud as my daughter. And I have told the girls that their mummy was an NHS hero. Can you remember your mummy? Can you remember your mummy's hair? Yeah. What colours was in it? White and black. Yeah. And then she had red in. Can you remember when she had red in?

Speaker 21

Red and blue Harley Quinn. Yeah.

Speaker 3

Clever. Yeah, she was a really bubbly, lovely personality without a filter. A real character, wasn't she? was so funny. She just pranked everybody all the time. She was the entertainment. You could put her in a field full of people. and in an hour she would know everybody's name. She was that type of person. Did she talk about her job?

Speaker 21

Well, not much, but I know she was really good at it, though, because she was always coming home late, but she was, really happy, like, and bubbly, like, because that's just her. I remember at the start when, like, all the schools started to shut, and I remember

Mum talking about that she was going to have to stay in the caravan for a bit to, like, be isolated from us because of work. so she did and we were upset so she came back so she only ended up sleeping in it for about a night and then came home and then every night she used to have to like chuck all of her work uniform in a bag and chuck it in the wash straight away in a pillowcase and she used to have to go straight in the bath and wash her hair I knew they were just doing it so obviously protect us but no one could give her a cuddle like we had to wait until she'd been in the bath.

Speaker 3

She was just Really terrified in case she brought anything home to her children. Not far from your mum's bench now, are we? Just round the corner. Our girls, all three of them, were our life. There, Connie. Our favorite flowers. They're nice. There's some flowers for you, Becky. A lot of these people on here died of COVID. That's what Mammy died of as well, isn't it? Yeah. It's got your name on there, Connie, look. Yeah. This is Mammy's plaque, look, Connie, and it says, love you to the moon and back, Rebecca Regan, Becky. Because her real name was Rebecca. But everybody called her Becky. And then it says, stay by our sides, Mammy. Love Sophie, Stacey, Connie, Jasmine. That's right, yeah. And she'll say that and she will stay by your side. Yes. So when you're being naughty. She's been here.

Speaker 20

I hope I like my sassiness.

Speaker 3

Do you think she'll like your sassiness? Yeah. Do you? I chose this part of the beach because when Becky used to get herself anxious about the COVID and going to work, she used to come down here and look out to sea. just before she went home, just to calm herself down before she went into the kids. I would ring her up and say, where are you? And she would say, down on the beach. And that's where she used to be. So I just thought, you know, I'm going to have a bench here, looking out to what she would look out to when she wasn't feeling herself or upset in any way. She used to come. When we were in lockdown, she fell pregnant. I mean, I was worried about that. It just wasn't safe for her or the baby. I often think if she hadn't have been pregnant, would she still have been here?

Speaker 11

Today marks a sombre day as we join the list of countries who have seen more than 10,000 deaths related to coronavirus.

Speaker 7

Had I known that lockdown was going to be a long-term thing, I would have come back to Leamington to be with my family. We're a very tight-knit family. My dad was calling me, texts all the time, just asking us to be careful. He was always keeping abreast of the situation. He was very serious with the concern of this virus. If you didn't know where my dad was, come to the allotment. You'll find him here. And what was your dad like? My dad was a planner, very purposeful when he did something. So he thought everything through. That was very much the case of the allotment. Reading books, asking people, researching, coming here, panning out where everything will go. He was a very meticulous and methodical man. He was an engineer by trade, so I guess that carried through into everything he did. It worked for a long time. There's nothing we needed that he didn't grow. Grocery shopping became a thing of the past. Yeah, wise man.

Speaker 14

Great dad, a really great dad. He left us with a lot of good lessons, really thoughtful man, a big thinker and very caring.

Speaker 7

Always encouraging, but like you said, always funny. So we had like a bit of a family. We can't sing, we can't dance, we can't play football. What we can do is read books. So let's make sure we do it well. And that's the idea of being like, if you do something, do it well.

Speaker 10

Was it love at first sight?

Speaker 14

Oh, yeah, no.

Speaker 10

Dear, no.

Speaker 14

He was a good friend. I was comfortable with him.

Speaker 10

He was easy to get on with. When you marry your friends, it's better. Life is better. You know, you understand each other.

Speaker 11

If you or anyone in your household has a high temperature or a new and continuous cough, even if those symptoms are mild, you should all stay at home. Don't go to the GP or hospital. Instead, go to NHS.UK to check your symptoms and follow the specialist's medical advice.

Speaker 7

The beginning of all of this, the messaging was to stay home, protect the NHS and save lives. It was to, it felt like the onus was on us to remain away from the health service. So when he called one-on-one, when he spoke to his GP and they said stay at home, that's what he did. He isolated himself in here, in this room, in this living room. It seemed basically that they were treating it like common cold. They then gave him some antibiotics because they thought that it sounded like pneumonia. My mum came down to the living room where he'd been sitting on the sofa, sleeping upright because that's the advice he got, and found him with his head tipped back. And he didn't respond. Dad died here in this living room.

Speaker 14

You look in hindsight and you remember the fact that he wasn't ill. He was dying. It's like, wow, you were dying for two weeks. How could we have let that happen? And I feel so terrible. Really sorry, Dad. I really wish that we did more.

Speaker 10

Personally, I trusted that the professionals have got this, you know, They've got this.

Speaker 7

Everyone did what they were told to do. Never again should anyone have to stand there and think, did I do enough for my loved one? I think one of the unique things of losing someone in lockdown is you are forced to stare grief in the face. And it is you and grief for them. There's nothing to do. There's nowhere to go. There's no one to see. It's just you and grief.

Speaker 13

I can confirm today that for the first time, we're past the peak and we are on the downward slope. And we have so many reasons to be hopeful.

Speaker 18

The Saturday nights we used to have like a family night. It was a lovely time for all of us. as a family, just because it was the one time we were all together. So you're quite a musical family, are you? There would have been at least one person on the piano at some stage, and that included my uncle quite often, even though he was not in any way musically talented, but we never told him that. It's funny how much joy music can bring,

even if it's not being played well. You would never have got him off. For love, no money. He just loved to be the centre of attention. His favourite place in the world was Lanzarote. He just absolutely adored it. I mean, if he could be anywhere, it would have been there. But honestly, I think he loved Lanzarote the most because there was lots of Elvis impersonators. He loved Elvis and all of his music, and he thought that was legitimately the Elvis, like the king. And we never had the heart to tell him otherwise, so we nearly had to run past a bar to make sure that there wasn't an Elvis there before we walked past it. He loved to just dress up and perform, and he loved bringing joy to everybody, you know, because he was so joyful himself. Growing up, I honestly never thought he was special needs or disabled. Because I didn't know that he was meant to be any different, to me that was him. And so he didn't think he was different. He lived with us for a good 10 years and then he moved into residential care. The first lockdown that we had was a rough time for everybody, but I think having somebody in a care home at that time was even more difficult, especially if you were used to going and visiting once, twice, maybe three times a week. And so not to have that personal contact with him. It was really, really difficult for everybody. But I think especially for him, you can't explain something like a pandemic to somebody with a learning difficulty. We would have been able to FaceTime him on things occasionally, but he couldn't understand why you were in the phone and not in front of him. For lots of people with disabilities, I mean, it was really isolating and it was a scary time. We'd heard about other kind of care homes and how it just kind of goes through like wildfire. And it was the first time really that we thought, okay, this is quite serious.

Speaker 6

During lockdown, Mark took sick. We didn't really have this lockdown that everyone talks about. We were locked in with an illness. Mark suspected it was COVID. He started to say, don't come near me, don't touch me. He was protecting me and I was stupidly thinking it was a flu. Mark was responsible for buying me all these. just to bring a bit of joy into my life. This gnome is my pride and joy, because this is the last one he bought me just as lockdown. He's happened on Mother's Day in March 20. And he did wear glasses as well. So it kind of does really look apart for the Santa beard, but that was it. But he was Santa at Christmas as well. Thank you. You're welcome. Thank you. Too much. Too much.

Speaker 2

I do think that if Dad was still here, we would definitely be moved out. But we're not quite ready to leave Mum. I just want to have as much time with her because my time with Dad was stolen.

Speaker 6

When he had COVID, he told me he didn't want to die. And I'm still not ready for him not to be here. None of us were ready for this. We're all grieving and the house is just full of grief.

Speaker 2

Like we're literally traumatised by that period of time we was in the hospital.

Speaker 20

Four of us slept in this bed in the night, hugging each other because we would obviously phone during the night as well because they had around o'clock care. You'd be so nervous, like so, nervous. And I genuinely think that me, you and Hope all thought he would come back. Even just the fact that we never got to say goodbye. Like that, that's one thing. I don't know if that's what prevents me from being able to like move on, but we didn't get to be with him when he passed.

Speaker 2

He literally passed away. and had pictures of us around him. And we got sent a video of him passing away. That's all we could get.

Speaker 1

And how are you guys since you've lost your dad?

Speaker 2

I feel pain in my heart every single day that I know is never going to go away. But I find it really sad that I'll never be that person again.

Speaker 1

And I noticed you've all got the same.

Speaker 2

Yeah, the same.

Speaker 20

We all got dad's ashes in it. Makes me feel like I'm connecting to him.

Speaker 2

It's religiously on, but I can see you've got a wee necklace as well.

Speaker 1

This is, I've got a little picture of my mum. This is actually my mum's.

Speaker 20

Oh, is it? Oh, wow. She's beautiful. Do you feel like it connects you to her too?

Speaker 1

Yeah, you just want those things. I get that. You do, don't you?

Speaker 20

I personally think that if that's what keeps you, like, comforted, then it's so different to every person.

Speaker 1

Do what you've got to do. The picture I have of my mum in my locket was taken on her 21st birthday. Two years later, she married my dad, John. All my mum ever wanted was to be a mother. She spent her whole life looking after everyone else, which is why my greatest sadness is that I couldn't do that for her in the end.

Speaker 11

There's been a huge need to protect people in care homes. From the start, we've worked incredibly hard to throw that protective ring around our care homes. Yes, it has been difficult.

Speaker 1

It had been nearly two months since I'd last seen my mum through her window. It was such a confusing time, but I kept a diary just to try and help make sense of it all. 10th of May, I get the phone call I've been dreading. My mum has tested positive. The carers say, don't worry, we love you, Mum. She won't be alone. I keep hoping she'll pull through. The carers say she's a fighter. May 25th, Mum is going downhill, and I need to be with her. But the next day, before I can get to Durham, Mum dies. Three carers were holding her hand, and I will be grateful to them for the rest of my life. When I finally get to Durham, I see Mum's body through the window. I now join thousands of others having to live without a proper goodbye.

Speaker 9

I remember something that I used to hear a lot of people say at the time, right, which was, Oh, it's only the old and the sick that are dying. I think a lot of people lost their humanity. One of my biggest regrets is I didn't get to go to his funeral. We were in lockdown. So, you know, I thought it was the right thing to do to miss my own granddad's funeral. I shouldn't have missed my granddad's funeral. It's the goodbye. It's the collective understanding that that person is gone, you know? It's a very important part of our cultural grief that we all need to experience and that we all do. And it never happened. That never happened for me. I stayed in London and had my own mini funeral, where I essentially adorned my favourite suit, listened to Vera Lynn and all his

favourite kind of classics. Those songs connect me to him, and I know it's because it meant something to him. Although I don't think... He could have imagined that all this would have resulted in an alter ego as a 1940s woman called Queer Lynn. My mantra after COVID is just, Why not? And it's just turned into my career.

Speaker 1

What do you think your granddad would think of Queer Lynn?

Speaker 9

He'd say, Get a real job. I'd say, Fair enough.

Speaker 13

It is now two months since the people of this country began to put up with restrictions on their freedom of a kind that we have never seen before in peace or war. Thanks to you, we've protected our NHS and saved many thousands of lives.

Speaker 4

Pubs and restaurants are set to reopen, but social distancing will be observed.

Speaker 9

People wanted life to be normal again. I understand that because isolation with my boyfriend at the time was sending both of us up the wall.

Speaker 7

I had mixed feelings because there was just such a juxtaposition from my pain to the country's relief at the time. We were like, yeah, I think we've made it through. But equally, I was also relieved myself.

Speaker 11

Do not step too far. We mustn't throw away the progress that has been made.

Speaker 18

I was very anxious about it, but at the same time I was eager to get back out, because I think, when all of that started, I was 20. So it almost felt like you were being stifled. And my uncle, once we were able to get in, he was delighted to see us. I mean, there's a few videos that I have of, you know, my granddad in full PPE, but as soon as my uncle walks in the door, he recognises him instantly. You know, he just knows who he is. And he doesn't even question why he has to wear it, he just comes in straight away and big hug, and you weren't meant to be hugging, you were meant to be, 6 feet apart, but how do you tell somebody like that, 6 feet apart, not to hug his daddy, because that's who it was. And then I think eventually he realises that my mum's also there.

Speaker 3

He really did think that we were potentially out of the woods. Really in regards to COVID.

Speaker 18

Yeah. Little did we know, the worst was something yet to come.

Speaker 3

And that changed our lives forever.

Speaker 4

Senior doctors and nurses are now warning lessons must be learned in order to prepare for a potential second wave. The advice remains, COVID and crowds don't mix, not even in the glorious setting of our finest beaches.

Speaker 22

People thought everything was starting to go back to normal. Was it explained properly by officials? I don't think so.

Speaker 13

We are saying, don't go to work, go to work. Don't take public transport, go to work, don't go to work. Stay indoors. If you can work from home, go to work. Don't go to work. Go outside, don't go outside. And then we will or won't, something or other.

Speaker 11

I know. People are cautious about going out. But we wouldn't have lifted the restrictions if we didn't think we could do so safely.

Speaker 18

You didn't really know one week to the next what you were allowed to do. One day it was like, yes, you can go to your hairdresser, and then the next day it was, no, you can't go to your golf course.

Speaker 22

We had to sit down sometimes and talk about it, the three of us, and say, what can we do, what can't we do, sort of thing, you know?

Speaker 11

Our economy relies on consumption. especially social consumption. The pubs, cafes, restaurants, hotels and B&Bs that bring life to our villages, towns and cities.

Speaker 18

We always talked about the economy at that time. You know, it was, get back out there, spend your money, because you've saved it over COVID, now you have to spend it. So it did seem like life was back to normal.

Speaker 11

I can announce today that for the month of August, We will give everyone in the country an eat out to help out discount.

Speaker 17

Eat out to help out. We had lots of conversations. We went round and round in circles. We were watching and the deaths were reducing and it looked like it was under some kind of control. Bob figured that Birmingham was a good option. It was just really nice to go out and just have that normality again. It was like we're getting to the end of this awful experience.

Speaker 18

Did you come here with Bob?

Speaker 17

I think there's probably not a restaurant we didn't eat at some point.

Speaker 18

Didn't really cook, did he?

Speaker 17

No.

Speaker 18

But he loved to take us out to eat and... Yeah, he ate enough for all of us. Really.

Speaker 17

That's actually true. He was a bomb fever. He really was. Yeah. He used to enjoy his food.

Speaker 18

And what was your first impressions of Bob? I was quite young when I met him.

Speaker 17

I think I was seven or so.

Speaker 18

He was a character. That's the best way I would describe him. He would take us away on these amazing holidays and we saw things that I would never have seen had it not been him. I'm very lucky to have had him in my life.

Speaker 17

Because Bob was always looking for the next adventure. He hadn't finished one before he was organising the next. That's just the way Bob rolled. So as soon as it opened up, Bob couldn't wait to get away. He had itchy feet. Then our life turned upside down. Bob was only 53 and he was healthy. It seemed inconceivable that this little bug could kill Bob.

Speaker 18

I wouldn't have minded locking down for a decade if it meant he could be with us again. I was working in hospitality. I remember going back to work and thinking, we're open, so it must be okay, And I remember people queued right the way across the high street, so much so that they actually blocked the middle of the high street just to get into our cafe alone. But I don't think we were really concerned about it because that time of the pandemic, I genuinely didn't even know anybody really that had COVID, never mind died from it.

Speaker 7

Did not make sense to me to go from Do not leave your homes. You cannot meet anyone outside. You cannot do anything because you will spread this virus to... But you can have dinner with five other people in a confined restaurant. As long as, you know, you just sit a bit apart, it'll be fine. Don't worry about it. In fact, we'll subsidize it.

Speaker 17

I worked in hospitality for many, many years, so I have a tremendous amount of sympathy for the struggles they went through. Hospitality is so important. to this country and our economy. There is no right answer on this. Most people who did eat out to help out didn't die. But do bear in mind, some of us lost everything. So a lot of the stuff Bob had, I've taken to the charity shop. But there's some stuff that I literally simply cannot get rid of. That's from our wedding. We had a Mad Hatter's tea party thing. And these are my real problem. His Hawaiian shirt collection. And this is just a small amount. Basically, Bob never met a Hawaiian shirt he didn't like. The louder the better. And the kids would turn around and go, oh, no, mum, please, we're not going out with him wearing that. There were two different people in Bob. There was the sensible... lawyer that people saw when he went to work, show up in court with his tie on and respectful and your honour. But underneath, of course, he would always be wearing a

crazy pair of underwear because he couldn't quite possibly get rid of that other side of Bob. Me and Bob, I think, are the only people in the world who found each other funny. No matter how bad the day had been, we could make each other laugh. And I really miss that.

Speaker 1

I feel like that about my mum. My mum was such a giggler that sometimes she'd giggle so hard.

Speaker 17

I was slightly frightened she might not be able to stop. Well, Bob actually gave himself something called laughing syncope once. He was watching something, and he laughed so hard he passed out. And that's what Bob and I had in common. We would just find stupid things funny. And... I was hoping that by now I would be able to look at these without struggling. But hey-ho, there we go, everything in its time, right? 17th of August. Bob can't breathe. He's no longer lucid. At about 2:00, the doctor calls. They're putting him on a ventilator. He's really sick. Bob calls me, and for the last time, I hear my husband say he loves me. How he's sorry. He took us away. He's crying. He never cries. I know I will never see my soulmate alive again. That thought that his last thoughts were regret rather than the joy of his life. really hurts me. It wasn't his fault. And the thought that he blamed himself haunts me to this day.

Speaker 11

In some parts of the country, the virus is spreading fast. Our strategy is to suppress the virus, protecting the economy, education and the NHS until a vaccine can make us safe.

Speaker 18

You started to hear things like, prepare for the winter and for another peak. And I kind of thought, like, are we going to do all that again?

Speaker 4

Unless radical restrictions are imposed, Sage warns the action taken so far is simply not enough to rein in the virus.

Speaker 5

Some senior ministers did argue for this circuit breaker idea, a short, sharp lockdown over half-term, but they were overruled amid concerns about heaping even more damage on an economy already battered.

Speaker 1

By autumn, it was clear a second wave was coming. It was only a matter of time before we would need to lock down again.

Speaker 5

The first lockdown had a significant effect on my brother's mental health, and he became really depressed. I was really worried about him, and I didn't want for that to happen again.

Speaker 1

Tell me the story of your lives together.

Speaker 5

John and I were born in Southport. We were twins, and we had that very much twin closeness when we were very small. We were very different. He was larger than life, much more outgoing as a person than I would say I am. He became a Chippendale, fire dancing, fire eating. He got his \*\*\*\*\* pierced, he got his penis pierced. He was very much into his physical body and being really fit. He was obsessive with it.

Speaker 1

That is quite a six-pack.

Speaker 5

He liked to push himself and do these crazy physical things. Just loved life and really liked being active. I clearly don't know the dance. You were told by your own scientists many weeks ago that you would have to take national action in order to save lives. Prime Minister, what took you so long?

Speaker 13

This is a constant struggle to balance that scientific advice with the consequences for people's lives, for people's mental health, people's livelihoods that come from lockdown measures.

Speaker 5

The second lockdown, I think, for anyone, it was difficult. My brother lived on his own. And so he was by himself the whole time. He was having panic attacks. He wasn't eating. I was really, really concerned because it just really wasn't like him. And he spent a lot of time on the internet watching conspiracy theories. You know, he said COVID's not real. And, you know, he wouldn't wear a face mask because, like, why should I? I've had all my freedom taken away with me by the state. Now they're telling me I have to wear a face mask. That's the one thing he could control. So he decided to opt out of

that. thought process was all linked to the isolation of the lockdown and him being by himself.

Speaker 13

The national restrictions in England will end on the 2nd of December and they will not be renewed. This will be still a hard winter. Christmas cannot be normal and there's a long road to spring, but we have turned a corner and the escape route is insight.

Speaker 5

This time, the hope, a needle in millions of arms, provides the way out of all of this.

Speaker 4

The Prime Minister made clear the vaccine won't change life for now, but hope is on the horizon.

Speaker 13

The first phase will include care home residents, health and care staff, the elderly and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

Speaker 12

It couldn't come fast enough for me because they wanted this horrible disease come to a stop, so we could sort of get back to normal life again.

Speaker 17

I think that vaccine is something that we should be rightly proud of. Finally, it felt as though there was hope.

Speaker 5

I thought, I can't wait to get the vaccine. I remember when my parents got it, I think I cried.

Speaker 3

I actually had it in the December, but Becky was unable to have the first vaccine because she was pregnant. At that point, pregnant women weren't allowed to have it.

Speaker 14

Lauren was due to have the vaccine, but she fell in.

Speaker 10

We she tested positive.

Speaker 22

Yeah.

Speaker 10

She was supposed to have the vaccine through her job in the NHS.

Speaker 5

This new surge in cases couldn't come at a worse time of year for the NHS. In Wales, they're dealing with their highest level of pain.

Speaker 10

Patients now. The virus was so prevalent in the Rhondda at the time.

Speaker 22

A lot of ill health in the Rhondda anyway, a legacy of our mining past. And there's quite a bit of social deprivation, I'm sure that didn't help. I work in a local GP practice in Tonopandy, and you start to hear a story then about so-and-so up the valley, the whole family's been wiped out. Everybody then decides to go and do the Christmas shopping. She could see it on the news and everything, and thought, this is not good, this is not good. And of course, Paul, being a police officer, was going to sudden deaths, so he was seeing more of that side of it, which was attributed to COVID.

Speaker 10

I think potentially I caught it in work and passed it on to obviously Karen and then obviously Lauren self-isolating with us. This is.

Speaker 22

Outdoor. My daughter Lauren. So Lauren was 25.

Speaker 10

She lived with us. I don't think she had any intention of leaving. I don't think she enjoyed living with us.

Speaker 1

You made it too comfortable for her.

Speaker 10

I think we made it too comfortable, yeah.

Speaker 22

She worked part-time at GP surgery in Tonopandy with myself. While she was doing a degree, an Open University degree, she lived to travel. Oh, she loved to travel. She's

been to every continent apart from Australia and the Poles. And she absolutely loved her.

Speaker 1

Is Lauren your only child?

Speaker 22

Lauren's our only child. We didn't know whether we could have Lauren, actually. So she was our miracle child.

Speaker 10

Initially, when myself and Karen tested positive, Lauren was negative. I was really ill.

Speaker 22

It's the worst thing I've ever experienced physically. I thought, I'm going, I'm going to die. Paul thought the same. And Lauren being Lauren, she was looking after us.

Speaker 10

Yeah, she took me to hospital on the 20th of December. And then the following Tuesday, she had to drive Karen there as well.

Speaker 22

Because we couldn't get ambulances.

Speaker 10

On the Sunday then, the roles were reversed and I had to drive Lauren to the hospital. She walked in through the doors of the hospital.

Speaker 22

And that's when life changed.

Speaker 10

Never for one minute did I think she would never come out. I'll always carry guilt with me that I caught it and passed it on. I have nightmares about it and probably will forever. It is a pretty grim and depressing picture at the moment. The situation in the UK is precarious in many parts already.

Speaker 7

When it came to the second wave, and with more people dying, I think I felt anger like I'd never felt before. And it just started to feel like we were on a cycle now, where

something terrible happens, we lock down, the government learns nothing, we open back up, something terrible happens again.

Speaker 3

You've got to remember my daughter died in the second wave. Did they not learn anything from the first wave? Obviously when the second wave comes, she was pregnant then. She was definitely more at risk for that reason alone. So she did take a lot of time off through anxiety, but she went back to work to do three shifts. There were so many people off ill, felt pressured to go back to work and to make her maternity pay right for when she had the baby. These are the journals that I was given from the hospital. Becky were brought to A&A via ambulance on the 18th of January. You were becoming very short of breath. since testing positive for COVID-19. The decision was made by our medical team that in order to keep you and baby safe, we would have to take you for a cesarean. We contacted your mum to let her know and you had a quick chat with her on the phone. That chat was the last time I spoke to my daughter and she told me that she was going to die and would I look after her babies? As soon as Becky delivered Jasmine, they put her into an induced coma. This is her little journal, bless her.

Speaker 1

Did she ever get to see Jasmine?

Speaker 3

I think she'd seen a picture of her before they did that. So she never, she didn't see Jasmine. They told me Jasmine never had COVID. The breathing issues that Jasmine did have was just because she was so premature. But, I mean, she's a little miracle, isn't she? We could have lost both of them. So at least we've got little Jasmine. One day I will show these to Jasmine. and it'll help explain what happened to her mammy.

Speaker 1

I.

Speaker 3

Think you forget how small she was and how poorly she was, because at the time we were all just concentrating on Becky, really. The day she died, I was really surprised I was allowed to go in and see. Becky and they asked me where I would like to be. I thought I want her to be the way I brought her into the world, in my arms. So I don't think they were very happy about that because I removed my PPE. They told us that they were going to call security and I just wasn't bothered at all. I wanted her skin against mine, like I brought her into the world. I needed her to go out with the last thing she felt was my touch. And I'm forever grateful for that. And a lot of people didn't get that privilege. I

just can't imagine how people feel losing loved ones and not being able to say goodbye to them.

Speaker 1

I'm really glad she had that.

Speaker 18

I really am.

Speaker 1

I know that matters.

Speaker 4

Welcome back, everyone. For some, this is what freedom looks like. No social distancing, very few masks.

Speaker 12

I hope the worst is behind us. What the vaccines have done is they've prevented now 60,000 deaths. You know, that's truly massive.

Speaker 1

As millions of us had the vaccine, life slowly started to get back to normal, but not for everyone.

Speaker 5

Because of the impact of the lockdowns on my brother's mental health that led him to not get vaccinated. It made him not believe that COVID was really real, that it was some kind of conspiracy. When he was dying, the doctors said he did say, Why? Did I not have the vaccine? Why didn't I do it? His last message to me was, I love you. Don't give up on me. I'm no longer cross at my brother for believing it. I'm cross at the peddlers of the lies and the disinformation. I'm a twin without a twin. That's a hard thing for you to get your head around that they're not here anymore.

Speaker 18

By September of 2021, my uncle Raymond would have had two vaccines. And so that worry about my uncle's situation, even if there was another wave, I thought, he'll be fine. But they rang to say that he was showing signs of COVID, so they were going to move him to the nearest hospital. We were told, you know, that actually this was not looking good. You didn't even have time to process it because everything was happening so quickly that, you know, you didn't have time to kind of advocate. We're logical people, like we do know he probably wouldn't have survived. But that part of

being included is very, very important in the grief process, knowing that you did everything you could. It was the last thing we could have done for him, and then it was taken away. In terms of how many people with disabilities died during the pandemic, it was just shocking. These people, they deserve to be given a chance. And even if it is only a small chance, it's still a chance. His death really wasn't what it should have been.

Speaker 1

Here it is. This is my mum. One year after the start of the first lockdown, I came down to help paint hearts on this wall with other bereaved. We wanted to acknowledge all those we'd lost. Last year when I came, this heart had washed away. and I couldn't find it and I was really upset because obviously they fade.

Speaker 4

That's why these amazing volunteers just constantly keep them fresh.

Speaker 1

So Fran, we met on the day the wall was created. Seems a long time ago, doesn't it? How many hearts now, do you think?

Speaker 17

We'd lost count a long time ago.

Speaker 2

It was never meant to become a memorial. It was just meant to be a visual representation of how many deaths we'd had. But we realised really quickly that the hearts were fading, so a little group of us got together.

Speaker 17

And committed to coming to try and stop the wall from disappearing. Been like an anchor through this period of my life.

Speaker 5

It's really helped me with adjusting to life without the man that I love.

Speaker 2

I had no idea that it would become such a huge part of my life, but also being part of something which is so important to so many people.

Speaker 4

I've been coming here now for three years, and I make the journey from Stoke-on-Trent, which no one can believe. But for me, it's a pilgrimage. We help people who can't get to London, and we do their hearts for them. We have to remember each and every one of these people that have died. All our loved ones gone. And this is why I come every week.

Speaker 2

You are okay.

Speaker 4

See you later. Bye, honey. It's a historical monument. And its position here across from the Houses of Parliament is especially meaningful. And whoever is in power, I hope they look across the water and remember what we've lost. I don't know what I'd do without it, to be honest. It's over four years since my husband died of COVID. And you worry about wearing your friend's patience thin. And one thing about it being with other bereaved is that that will never happen. I just miss him and I miss his face because I really loved his face. And it's just hard to believe that he's still not still here.

Speaker 1

We all grieve differently and find our own ways to cope with losing someone we love.

Speaker 10

Initially, one for me died, I told the kids, I said, Guys, I'm giving up the allotment. And they screamed. I said, Mum, please don't give up the allotment. I don't know what I'm doing at the allotment. But I come because it is comforting. It's a place of solace. I miss him. Grief was a physical thing. I was ill for ages. I had to brace myself to leave the house at any point in time. It was just horrible. It's better. But I realized it's something I'm going to have to live with.

Speaker 7

Losing my dad just tore me apart. Not only has my life changed, I have changed as a person, fundamentally and forever. Grief for me was just the need to feel like I was doing something. And that led me to get involved with the COVID-19 Bereave families with justice campaign. I need to know what happened. I need to know what we need to change. I need to see that change happen. I don't think anyone's ever argued that people would die in a pandemic. The issue that I have, and I think many others have, is how many people died.

Speaker 12

Hopefully, the inquiry will bring some kinds of closure.

Speaker 18

Even when we get the answers, will we be able to grieve? It's a really good question.

Speaker 6

I think we need to learn lessons and not put another generation through what we've went through.

Speaker 12

These are the names of the victims of COVID-19.

Speaker 9

If you'd told me before COVID that I would be the kind of person to go and get on a megaphone and stand outside Parliament, I think I would have laughed. But as passionate as I am about getting accountability, if you don't move on, you just get eaten up. I think that'd be more of a dishonest to my granddad than anything else. So you just have to soldier on.

Speaker 5

When someone dies as part of this huge collective grief, you can never escape it. Personally, I kind of avoid hearing about it because I find it upsetting.

Speaker 1

Hi, Larry. I like the fact that you're always smiling, Larry. You're always smiling. We all have our own ways to live with our loss. For me, I need answers to why so many died in care homes like my mum's.

Speaker 11

At least 25 people have died at Melbury Court, thought to be the highest single death toll in a care home in Britain. The UK government insist they threw a protective ring around care homes.

Speaker 4

Protective ring. Professor Sir Jonathan Van Tamme says in his statement, My view is a ring is a circle without a break in it. However you describe the protective processes you.

Speaker 11

Put in place around the care sector, they did not form an unbroken circle, did they? It is quite clear from the evidence that Professor Van Tamme is right.

Speaker 4

Thank you.

Speaker 1

What happened in my mum's care home was a tragedy, but it was heartbreaking to learn there was such a huge loss of life in care homes all over the UK.

Speaker 11

Perhaps the deadliest error was the government's decision to move patients from hospital into care homes without them being tested for coronavirus.

Speaker 17

This is me and this is Bob. That was going to be our retirement, sat together on a couch, snuggled together, just nattering away. I didn't just lose the love of my life. I also lost the person that dealt with all the bills, dealt with everything. The loss of Bob has meant that he can no longer afford to stay in the family home. And We're having to move.

Speaker 4

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told the Commons that he always took scientific advice throughout the pandemic.

Speaker 11

Professor, eat out to help out.

Speaker 4

Were you consulted on that scheme? Absolutely not. The first I heard about it was think on the TV. This is exactly encouraging what we've been trying to suppress and get on top of. in the last few months. So it didn't feel sensible to me.

Speaker 11

In order to safeguard the jobs of 2 million people working in the sector, you need people to go and use those businesses. People were not likely to return to those old behaviours, and this was designed to help encourage them to do so in a safe way. I believe it was the right thing to do to safeguard those jobs.

Speaker 17

I understand we have to keep the country afloat. But equally, I think there were things that they could have done that I believe would have saved my husband's life and many, many other lives. I don't want heads on pikes. I don't. Because I understand people make mistakes. We hadn't been through anything like this in our lifetimes. But I want them to learn from this. No government, again, should be allowed to make these decisions without at least consulting with scientists who know what they're talking about.

Speaker 19

Over the last few years, trying to deal with my dad's death has been very difficult, because he could have had a good few more decades in him to enjoy his life. He wanted to retire. He wanted to enjoy his time with his grandchild. My son's due date was actually the day that my dad passed away. And he came out a week early, always felt like it was meant to be. My dad got to see him, he held him once and to see a smile on his face when he held my son, something I'll always cherish, it was beautiful. I think it probably would be one of the best days of his life. So does that give you a bit of comfort? I definitely feel it's given me comfort for sure, but he didn't deserve to die the way that he did. I think for me that's where the anger And it hurts. But I have to make peace.

Speaker 10

She had a really contagious laugh. I always play this when I want to do it a laugh.

Speaker 5

How would you describe your experience with the health service around Lauren's critical illness with COVID-19?

Speaker 10

Our experience was just shocking, really poor communication. It was a terrible experience.

Speaker 22

They say we were lucky that we could go and sit with her at the end, but I don't call that luck.

Speaker 10

I don't call it luck, no. It just keeps going around in my mind all the time. Would it have been any different if they'd maybe put her on a ventilator the night before? I wonder whether there were enough ventilators available because the hospitals were so full and maybe that had a bearing on what happened. I don't know. We never know. We never know.

Speaker 22

Ollie has slept on Lauren's bed. more or less since we've lost her. He was pining for her.

Speaker 10

He certainly finds comfort in the bedroom here, as I do, because it's the way we left it.

Speaker 22

Lauren's belongings will go out after Paul and I have gone.

Speaker 10

Yeah, as it should have been.

Speaker 22

As it should have been, yeah. And all our Christmas presents and still unopened in the wardrobe.

Speaker 10

We can't bring ourselves to open them. We do put them under the tree every year now. Maybe one day. I wish we could time travel and I could go back and warn people about the pandemic.

Speaker 8

He loved aftershave, so I just can't throw them away. It's just Richie.

Speaker 1

I'm sure you miss him a lot.

Speaker 8

I feel as though they were swiped off the face of the earth. We'll never, ever get over it. He can get through the day, but nights are very, very lonely, terrible.

Speaker 1

Well, you were married a long time, weren't you?

Speaker 8

Yeah.

Speaker 1

If he was here, what would he say to him?

Speaker 12

To start owning.

Speaker 8

He'd have him back tomorrow. He could mow all he liked.

Speaker 12

Yeah, true.

Speaker 5

It's emotional, but she needs to be here. This is her place to be here. She's had so much love on this road.

Speaker 21

When my mum carried on working, it was kind of scared to all of us. But she decided to risk it for her life out there because, they needed NHS workers because there weren't enough.

Speaker 14

There was panic mode in that hospital. But Arima taught me never to be scared of nothing. Put your patients first. So we used to go in COVID bays and held their hand. But this deadly virus was so aggressive that it didn't matter what age you were. First thing, my sister died and then slowly seeing other people die. I couldn't cope, carry on. I felt suicidal after Emma went. I would do anything to be with her. So I haven't tried to take my own life. But look, I'm still here because it didn't work. And then that's when I thought I need help. Since then, moved to another trust. The plaque, the friends, the corridors, everything was just too rural for me.

Speaker 5

Of course, it was Boris Johnson who made all the main decisions during the pandemic.

Speaker 13

My position was that we had to save human life at all ages. We went into lockdown as soon as we could the first time round.

Speaker 5

The inquiry has heard from scientists and senior politicians that the 1st and 2nd lockdowns should have come earlier.

Speaker 11

Decisions were being delayed, changed and reversed through that autumn period.

Speaker 7

The evidence that we're hearing the inquiry now has been so much worse than we could ever imagine. We've suffered one of the worst death tolls in the world. By the time the 2nd wave came around, The government no longer has the defense of ignorance. I can't tell you how painful it is, having lost my father in the first wave, to see many more people joining me in grieving their loved ones. And it's heartbreaking to know that that could have been prevented.

Speaker 4

To the thousands of people represented by these hearts, you will never be forgotten.

Speaker 5

In 2019, it was widely believed that the UK was one of the best-prepared countries in the world to respond to a pandemic. This belief was dangerously mistaken. In reality, the UK was ill-prepared. There were serious errors on the part of the state. This cannot be allowed to happen again. The harrowing accounts of loss and grief serve to remind us why there must be radical reform.

Speaker 21

I try to come down as most as I can, but sometimes I can't come every day. But I write messages every time I come, so it'll be like at least over 100 now. I write like a little message for her, so like she knows that we're still like OK, and I will still remember her and it just helps me sort of feel better about myself and I think it would make her feel better because I can guess she would be up there smiling at that little message that I wrote for her.

Speaker 3

I just feel like it's just all been forgotten about. It's hardly ever mentioned anymore and it's killed so many people. You know, it's like it never existed. Only those who lost some money still talk about it.

Speaker 15

We all always celebrate her birthday.

Speaker 16

Keeps her alive, doesn't it? Keeps her memory going.

Speaker 15

All our friends and family, that day we celebrate and they all come down and celebrate with us.

Speaker 9

Love you, Chloe. Sometimes, genuinely, I can hear his laughter and I have dreams about him all the time. The most important thing is that we don't forget them. It's very easy for these people to slip away and to become numbers, but actually they were real, they were people, and they meant something.

Speaker 1

It matters to so many of us that the deaths of our loved ones won't be in vain.

Speaker 3

We're going to go along here, and we're going to put these flowers in for your mummy's birthday.

Speaker 7

We lost time, we lost opportunities, we lost loved ones. And I think it's important to recognise that as a nation, there should be a collective grief.

Speaker 21

Happy birthday. Miss you. Miss you. Love you. Love you. Have a nice day in heaven. Love you more.

Speaker 18

It has such a catastrophic impact on a lot of people's lives. We cannot let this happen again.

Speaker 4

Details of organisations offering support with bereavement or feelings of despair are available on the Action Line pages of the BBC website. Oh Lord, into my arms