# Closed Captions – Lyn Rowe in conversation with Samantha Dooley

*12 September 2017*

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Fancy meeting you here? Do you come here often?

**LYN ROWE:**  I don't know.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  So, is this alright for you?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, thank you.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Thank you, cool.  I have got my phone but it is so I can tell us when it is time.  Thank you so much for coming here today.  I have known you since I was 19, when I met you on one of my student placements.  But these good people may not know you as well.  Can you share a bit about you and your story, who you are?

**LYN ROWE:**  I am Lyn Rowe.  I am 55 years young.  I like to say "young" because I'm young at heart. I was born in 1962 and my mum took the drug thalidomide and that's why I am - why my arms and legs didn't grow.  In about 2012, we had a big class action to sue the drug company and we won.  So that was really good.  I am one of four daughters of my mum and they're very supportive.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  What number are you in the girls?

**LYN ROWE:**  I am number three.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Pretty powerful, 4 girls.  Over the years you would have had a variety of supports from disability providers can you explain a bit about that?

**LYN ROWE:**  I worked in a work unit for 34 years.  That was very good.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  What other supports do you get now or through your life?

**LYN ROWE:**  I had respite so my mum and dad could go away on holidays without me, so they can recharge their batteries.  So that they could keep on looking after me.  But now when they go away, my three sisters take it tag turn and come live in my house and then we all live together.  So that's very fun.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  You're telling me you are doing a bit of caring for your dad now?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, I am.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  You get some support every day or so?

**LYN ROWE:**  Every morning, I get support.  This morning, my carer rang in sick yesterday, so my mum had to get up about quarter to 6 to get me up, ready for the day, because the taxi came for me at 5 to 7 this morning.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  How old are your parents?

**LYN ROWE:**  My dad is 85 and my mum is 81.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Lyn, you had a lot of experience in disability and getting supports.  Can you share with these people some of the things that staff do that make you feel safe or that you - when they do something, it makes you feel confident in their work?

**LYN ROWE:**  The confidence, a carer being confident with me, making sure they listen to what I say.  Do what I want to do and not what they want to do.  So, yeah.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  They are the things that you like to do with the carer that makes you feel safe and . . .

**LYN ROWE:**  I like to go shopping and go to the movies and stuff like that.  Out for lunch with my friends, without my mum being there all the time.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  So, you are enjoying being a bit more independence?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, and this job is very good because I have been able to get taxies on my own and coming to work on my own without mum and dad being here or whatever.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  You're doing a few extra independent things at the moment, aren't you?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes.  I am.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Big adventures.  So, tell me, you've seen some things that make you feel - you know what makes you feel safe with a staff member, have you had some times where staff have made you feel unsafe or you haven't felt confident with their care?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, when my carers rang my mechanic for my chair and asked them to slow my chair down because my chair was too fast.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Did you know they were going to ring them?

**LYN ROWE:**  No.  He just asked, and he said, "She's one of the better drivers we've got".  I drive with my head and they said, "She's the better driver we've got, we're not doing anything to her chair".

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  So you are a speedster and I like your Speedo on your chair and watching it go up.  There is one particular thing about you that you often, you told me early on you need to feel safe that staff need to do to feel safe in your chair.  What is it?

**LYN ROWE:**  When I have my seatbelt off, I need to make sure I stay in, if I lean forward without my belt there is no return.  I keep going and going and going and gone . . . **(LAUGHTER)**.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Doomed!

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, a face-plant! I have had a few over the years.  It's not a good look.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  You've had some things happen with staff where they've done some things that make you feel unsafe.  You told me about someone? What did they do? Where did they end up?

**LYN ROWE:**  One of my carers went outside to get the mail and then she locked herself out of my house and that particular house I couldn't open the door and fortunately, the back door was still open so she could get in.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Because when you haven't got a carer with you, when you're on your own, you said to me you feel a bit scared then, is that right?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, I feel vulnerable.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Now, Lyn, we are going to share something you and I have chatted about.  Just so the audience knows, you feel comfortable with sharing this because this is an example of something that happened to you a while ago, but it was something that made you feel very unsafe.  Can you share with these people, please?

**LYN ROWE:**  Stupid me, I went to a disco at a disabled school and stupid me went outside to get some fresh air and one of the guys from my work was outside.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  A staff member.

**LYN ROWE:**  A staff member was outside, drunk as a skunk, and he called me over and I was thinking, "I won't go too close" and he was trying to unplug my chair at this stage, because my chair could be unplugged at the back.  He was playing with by boobs and I was very - I was trying to get - I had my chair on and I kept on reversing and then my mum called me and then . . .

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Did she see what was happening?

**LYN ROWE:**  No, she didn't.  I just bolted to mum.  But I didn't tell anybody until I got to work on Monday.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  So it happened on the Friday.

**LYN ROWE:**  It happened on the Friday night and I just froze.  I couldn't - I didn't know how to tell my mum and dad.  So I went to work as if nothing had happened.  When I saw the person at work, I just froze.  And I then I went to the manager's office and told him.  And he was very supportive.  So he had 11 pages of complaints of other people doing things to other people.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  So the manager knew that this person, perhaps, had been doing some bad things? Things that weren't good?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, they were just waiting on somebody else to - something else to happen and it was me. So they - he got the sack but that night, we had a company barbecue and I had to leave work early that day.  I went up to my friend's unit and I spoke to my mum and dad up there and they were very supportive.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Sorry for interrupting, who helped you talk to your mum and dad?

**LYN ROWE:**  My manager came with me to tell my mum and dad.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Sorry, I interrupted you.  You went to the barbecue that night?

**LYN ROWE:**  But then the next day he came back and asked for a reference.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  That was a staff member?

**LYN ROWE:**  So, my manager, I left my handbag in the toilets, in the ladies toilet, so my manager came into the ladies toilets so he could get my bag for me, so the guy couldn't see I was at work.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  So you felt very supported by your manager?

**LYN ROWE:**  I did.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  When I interrupted you, and I am sorry, what was interesting is your manager was able to help you talk to your mum and dad, who are very important in your life, is that right?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, they are very important.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  They help you speak up?

**LYN ROWE:**  Yes, and my other sisters and brother-in-law and nephews all help me.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  But you couldn't tell your mum and dad first on the weekend? Why couldn't you tell mum and dad and the manager helped you?

**LYN ROWE:**  I tried, but I didn't know what to say.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  You said to me one day you were in shock.

**LYN ROWE:**  I was in shock and didn't know what to say but that is okay.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Now your mum and dad and sisters still help support you.  Are there other things that help you speak up now?

**LYN ROWE:**  I've just got confidence to do that now.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  You have learned a few things over the years?

**LYN ROWE:**  I have learned a few things over the years.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  For today, what is some advice you would like to give people who work with people with disability? What would you like to tell them?

**LYN ROWE:**  All you people out there would be able to listen to people with disabilities, because they do have - they do - sorry about that - they do think.  They are just people.  If they're in a wheelchair, it's just because they're in a chair, they can't walk.  Think, see the person, not the disability.  Thank you for having us.

**SAMANTHA DOOLEY:**  Thank you very much.

**(APPLAUSE)**