

Appendix 1

Client Case Study 1

A Community Psychiatric Nurse for the Community Mental Health Team approached Welfare Benefits after Robert and Anne's landlord threatened to evict them, due to rent arrears.

The couple had no knowledge of claiming benefits, and were not even receiving tax credits for their three children.

For months, they had been relying on the goodwill of family for food and help with their bill however, as well as their rent arrears; they had substantial council tax arrears too.

Anne had severe difficulties with walking and Robert was suffering from severe depression which had meant that he had not been able to work for six months. Their only income at this time was the child benefit for the children (£47.10 per week) and the assessment rate for Employment and Support Allowance (£105.95 per week).

We assisted the couple to claim a backdated award of Council Tax Benefit and Child Tax Credits.

We also helped them claim Disability living Allowance - both were given appropriate awards so no appeal work was necessary.

As a consequence of the extra income the tenancy was saved and the couple were able to stay in the property and maintain their financial independence from family.

Client Case Study 2

Daniel and his partner have a young daughter and, whilst he has been keen to work he could not hold down a full time job due to his uncontrolled epilepsy. As Daniel could not be left alone with his daughter, his partner was unable to work either. In addition to that, due to the government changes in Tax Credits, he was no longer able to claim a top up of Working Tax Credits for the part time work he did. They were struggling financially and were signposted to us by the Children's Centre.

We identified that Daniel should be entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA). We helped him complete the forms but he was, unfortunately turned down. He had a very good case and we gathered a lot of supporting medical evidence for him and represented him in an appeal. The Disability and Carer's Service still did not change their decision and the case went to a tribunal hearing. On the day of the hearing, we presented Daniel's case and after just a few minutes of questions for Daniel, the Tribunal unanimously overturned the decision and gave him an award of DLA at the middle rate which equated to an additional £49.30 plus a lump sum back payment of just under £2000.

As a result of Daniel's DLA he was classed as a disabled worker which meant that he was awarded Working Tax Credits at the rate of £126.22 per week. His partner, who provided the supervision and care, was able to claim Carer's Allowance in recognition of her responsibilities and this was an additional £55.55 per week.

Overall, their annual income was increased by the sum of £12015.64, which not only maintained their tenancy but also helped Daniel and his family get back on their feet again.

Client Case Study 3

Jonathan is a 29 year old single man with mild learning disabilities. Whilst he has lived alone for many years, he always managed his financial affairs with support from his mother. When Jonathan's mother passed away bills and forms mounted up and he fell into six months of arrears with his rent because he had failed to return several housing benefit forms. Jonathan was getting some help from other family with the arrears, but this was causing significant strains in relationships. Our advisor worked collaboratively with the revenues and benefits team to secure six month backdating for the Housing and Council Tax Benefit, so Jonathan was able to pay back his family and deal with his arrears. Jonathan had barely any furniture in his flat so we were able to help him with a community Care Grant application. The award allowed him to buy some basics like a fridge and seating for the living room. Jonathan was referred for support to Nova Scarman (now "people can") to help maintain his tenancy.

Client Satisfaction Forms – just a few of the comments received over the year:

"The help and advice given was exceptional. He genuinely empathized with my situation and did the best to help me."

"What can I say – (he) is so caring and always on hand – so tireless in what must be such a stressful and demanding job."

"(Her) conduct throughout was quite exemplary. Thank you!"

"(she) was most helpful and understanding. She is a credit to the service."

"Words can't describe how appreciative I am. She is kind, patient and understanding but, above all, has an excellent knowledge of the legislation. If it were not for (her) the result probably would not have been in my favour and my health would have been detrimentally affected. Thank you for providing this service and my caseworker is a real asset to SSDC."

"I don't think I would have managed without this service and am so grateful to all the staff involved. Thank you!"

"I am so very grateful for all the help that was given to me and all the support. I can't thank you enough."

"I feel the help that (she) has given us has changed our lives. A credit to SSDC and Somerset."

"I would like to thank (her) for the sympathetic way she handled my case. I was so frightened when they cut my benefits. What a superb lady!"

"(She) is brilliant at her job and always has respect and understanding for me, which isn't always easy!"

***All names used are fictitious**