

Case Study

Client A came to Future Support 06/07/2016 for a food voucher. On discussing his situation it was discovered that he & his wife had had no money coming in for three weeks but were completely at a loss as to how they could sort this out.

He & his wife both have serious health conditions, both confirmed & still under investigation. However client A, after re assessment by DWP, had been found 'Fit for Work' & yet was told by a Work Coach at the Job Centre that his was too ill to be classed as a Job Seeker. As with many members of the public who do not understand the process or their rights, Client A took the work coach's words to be correct. The couple still had over one week to wait until Mr A's monthly disability payment of £220.40 was due, but using this to buy food would mean that no other bills would be paid, including rent, council tax, gas or electricity. The situation had already caused the Housing Benefit claim to be suspended & arrears had already started to mount.

At the point the couple came for help they had not eaten for several days. Mrs A has type 1 diabetes & was feeling very unwell. She explained to staff that she had been scraping out jam jars in an attempt to keep her blood sugar levels in check.

The couple are nearing retirement age & have both worked hard all of their lives before ill health made this impossible. They were both in disbelief that they could have ever found themselves in this position.

Staff at Future Support began work immediately by providing the couple with vouchers from Food Bank & information of where to go to get hot meals when needed. The council were informed of the 'Nil Income' situation in order to prevent action being taken in regard to the rent arrears & ensure Housing Benefit would be reinstated. A new claim to benefits was made in Mrs A's name in order to get some money coming in to the household as soon as possible. This still took some 14 days & during this time Staff continued to support with food vouchers. This helped with their immediate crisis & allowed work to begin on rectifying the issue with the original benefit.

It quickly became evident that Mr A had a series of unfortunate events, all arising from lack of knowledge & understanding of the system as well as lack of help & incorrect advice. This added to the complexity of the case. Unfortunately staff had to take the case all the way to the Courts & Tribunal Service to be heard in front of a judge & panel. This is a very distressing experience for a client & was particularly so for Mr A. However Staff supported him all the way through. The court hearing, 7th October 2016, was thankfully very brief & the decision made by the DWP was overturned. Our client was awarded his original status on Employment & Support Allowance in the Support Group & received all back pay due to him.

Whilst this was a huge piece of work which took many hours but it is by no means isolated & very typical of the kind of crisis our clients come to us in.