

Northamptonshire Centre for Independent Living Case Study – Anna

Anna was initially referred to the Northamptonshire Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) by her Multiple Sclerosis Specialist Nurse in November 2011, as she needed some help in completing an application for Disability Living Allowance.

With the expert guidance of Liz, a Welfare Benefits Officer, she was able to secure a high rate of mobility and middle rate of care allowance. Liz warned Anna, however, that it was likely she may be called back when the Welfare reform changes to her Incapacity Benefit started taking place.

This was indeed the case, and we received another call from Anna a year later when she informed us that she now had to complete a claim for Employment Support Allowance (ESA).

Liz helped Anna complete this new claim form, which was a questionnaire about her ability to look for work, and explained the process to her. Two months later we had a call from Anna to say that she had been put into the support group for ESA. She told Chrissie, the NCIL Disability Advice Assistant that she was very grateful and asked what this would mean for her. Chrissie explained that she would not need to attend any Job Centre interviews unless she wanted to, and that she could contact Department of Work and Pensions to find out when they would next assess her. Anna told her that she would rather not know!

Unfortunately. Though, only a few weeks passed before a distressed Anna rang once again – having been told that she had been wrongly informed in her letter and she was, in fact, in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) which meant that she had to attend the Job centre with a view to being placed with a Work Programme provider. Anna felt very strongly that her health condition meant that she should be in the support group, not the WRAG and this new development had left both her and her husband very upset and stressed.

We advised Anna to appeal against this judgement immediately and she drafted a letter, which was checked by the team, needing only minor adjustments. Chrissie gave Anna the contact details for the community law service, in case she needed to take a case against DWP. However it didn't come to that as two days later Anna was informed that she had appealed successfully and would be in the support group for two years.

Anna was extremely relieved and thanked the team at NCIL for their invaluable assistance at this acutely harrowing time, she also went on to say that she wouldn't hesitate to recommend our services to anyone who was in a similar situation at any time.