

Welfare Rights and Laura's Story

Local Area Coordinator: Anne Robinson

Date story written: 29 March 2021

Introduction:

Laura was introduced to Anne, the Local Area Coordinator, early 2019, and they had built a solid and trusting relationship over time. Laura, supported by Anne, had built her vision of a good life and Anne had been walking alongside her on her journey to a happier place. Socially, things had greatly improved for Laura and her confidence had grown. However, during this time, Laura's mobility had deteriorated and there were days when she found it very hard to walk or tend to her personal care needs.

Situation:

Laura had applied for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) but had been refused by the DWP. This had upset her greatly and she felt that appealing the decision was hopeless.

'I am confused as to why they turned me down. I struggle to care for myself and cannot get out when my legs are at their worst. I just don't know if I can go through an appeal on my own.'

Anne and Laura spoke about her options and Anne explained to Laura the role the Council's Welfare Rights team could play in her appeal, if she wished them to be involved. Laura, although still apprehensive, asked Anne if she would speak with Welfare Rights to ask if they would help.

- The individual or family leads but the Local Area Coordinator *supports people to get information about what is available.*

What happened:

Nel, from the Welfare Rights team, felt that Laura had good ground on which to appeal against the decision. Anne arranged for a video conference call between herself, Laura and Nel, as she knew that Laura would be very nervous about speaking to a stranger. Although initially reluctant to talk, Laura did begin to open up to Nel and spoke about her mobility issues; how and when the pain was

at its worst and how this affected her ability to lead a full and independent life. Laura, by her own admission, sometimes struggled to understand information, so Nel took time to explain the appeal's process and what she could expect. With Anne's support, Laura submitted the necessary appeal request and waited to hear the appeal date.

Nel, Laura and Anne frequently met on-line in the weeks leading up to the appeal hearing, allowing Nel to explain that it would be conducted over the telephone and who would be attending. Nel took time to listen to any concerns Laura had about the hearing and carried out a mock question and answer session to help her feel less anxious when answering personal questions about her condition and how it affects her life. Nel also helped Laura to understand that, whilst they could not speak on her behalf, both she and Anne would be there offering morale support.

Laura, although very nervous and emotional throughout the hearing, explained her situation very well and how her mobility issues affected her on a day-to-day basis.

Thankfully, within a fortnight of the hearing, Laura was informed that her appeal had been successful and PIP (Personal Independence Payments) had been awarded and backdated.

What's next:

The award has the potential to transform Laura's life. In the time Anne had known her, Laura had purchased several cars, all of which proved unreliable and costly to repair. When the cars were off the road, this would leave Laura housebound and feeling isolated. The PIP award has meant that Laura is now able to afford to purchase a motorised scooter, which will enable her to get out and about and lead a full life again. Laura now also has more financial security and this will allow her to pay for taxis when attending hospital appointments.

"I can't believe I won. I could not have gone through this appeal without the help of Anne and Nel and I can't thank them enough. Its not just about

the money, although this will help me, it is also how proud I feel that I could go through something so stressful and speak up about personal issues to strangers. The PIP have backdated the award and I am going to use this to purchase a motorised scooter, which will give me the freedom to go out, even when my legs are bad.” Laura

Has the story been approved by the individual/s to be shared with outside agencies?

Yes
