

Offering Holistic Support to Settle in a New Home Case Study 2016-17



Livinia was referred to us by her housing association. She had been re-housed in a new area of Merton following a period of homelessness, and was struggling to settle in her new home, in addition to managing a range of impairments and a progressive health condition.

Livinia had already been supported by other organisations for specific issues, but there had been no holistic support to help her get her life on track in her new home. In fact, when Livinia was first referred to us, she initially turned us away, saying she didn't need any support. A few months later, her housing officer re-referred her to us as she was experiencing some difficulties at home, and this time, Livinia did accept our support. We were initially asked to help Livinia apply for Attendance Allowance, which we did, and to help organise some of the practicalities of being in a new home, such as changing her registered address with a range of companies, as she was struggling to do

this alone.

We initially discussed Livinia's needs with her and gave her the option of trying to get more support from Social Services or to access more community support. Livinia wanted more community support so we signposted her to a range of local services, some of which she took up. During one of our visits with her, our caseworker observed that Livinia was very short of breath and asked about her health. It turned out that her asthma medication had run out and she was struggling to engage with her new GP surgery.



Livinia told us that she had been struck off the GP list at her previous surgery because she didn't attend appointments. In order to address the immediate problem, we supported her to get a repeat prescription sent to her nearest pharmacy. To deal with the issue in a more substantive way, we supported her to engage with her new GP

surgery and agreed with them that because of her difficulties reading letters or texts, and because of her memory lapses, the surgery would telephone her to remind her of appointments a week in advance, and on the day of the appointment itself. This additional support meant that Livinia's barriers to accessing healthcare had been reduced.

In the course of her engagement with us, Livinia revealed her worries that she was falling into rent arrears, despite being in receipt of Housing Benefit. We supported her to get clarity on her rent arrears and Livinia chose to clear those immediately rather than implementing a payment plan. We then helped her to set up a regular direct debit to meet the small monthly shortfall between her Housing Benefit and her rent, service, and other charges. This gave her peace of mind as she no longer risked falling behind on her rent. Another area of support was working with Livinia to get her gas supplier to supply a gas meter with a bigger dial so she could read it, and we helped to ensure that she was put on the priority list for heating.



Finally, Livinia revealed that she was struggling to access some money she was entitled to because she couldn't get a copy of a death certificate – she was unable to access an online service which was the only method to request the certificate. We contacted the Council concerned and supported Livinia to persuade them to take a telephone request, which they eventually did.