

Our Supported Volunteering Programme Supporting Independent Living Case Study 2016-17



We offer a supported volunteering programme for disabled people who want to volunteer with us. One of our supported volunteers was referred to us two years ago by a local organisation. When Joginder initially came to us, she was supported to attend meetings with us by the other organisation, and we discussed a range of possible accessible adaptations such as agreeing a safe space for Joginder to go if she became overwhelmed. However, she quickly built up a rapport with our staff and was able to attend our volunteer training programme without her support worker. We gave Joginder a lot of space to develop into her role and coached her on appropriate use of work resources such as the internet. Over time, Joginder built up a range of practical office administrative skills, at which she excelled, including tasks which really supported our

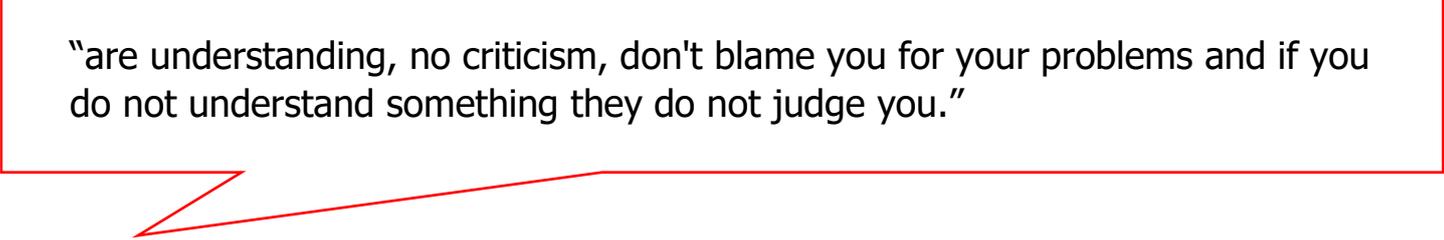
team, such as using our database.

While volunteering with us, Joginder also accessed our Advice & Advocacy service. She had been overpaid by DWP but was unable to resolve the issue herself because her benefits were managed by an appointee. Joginder felt that she could manage her own affairs and with the support of her family and appointee, we helped her to end the appointeeship and take control over her own affairs. As she had been getting the Disability Living Allowance benefit, which had lapsed, we advised her to apply for Personal Independence Payment (the replacement for DLA). Initially Joginder was very worried that this would lead to DWP realising that an overpayment had been made to her and that they would try to reclaim it back at once. We explained that claiming PIP would have no influence over how her overpayment would be treated and based on her income and expenditure we advised that it should be possible to negotiate a payment plan it wouldn't be the lump sum which she was worried about. If



she got the PIP benefit, she would be better off overall. Following this advice, Joginder did apply for PIP and we supported her with the application form, we supported her at the health assessment, we did the mandatory reconsideration when it was declined, and we supported her to appeal. This was an important process for Joginder because she felt that she didn't have a fair assessment and she wanted to appeal and go to Tribunal to address what she felt was unjust. She was awarded the benefit following her appeal.

In the meantime, Joginder has continued to volunteer with us and has blossomed into a much more confident person than she was two years ago. Joginder's goal is to find paid employment, and she is now confident enough to take the step of answering our phone and hopes to be able to cover reception for us. For Joginder, the fact that we encourage, but don't pressure, has been important to her. She said that she would recommend us to others because we



"are understanding, no criticism, don't blame you for your problems and if you do not understand something they do not judge you."

When we work with people we check how they feel on a range of key measures through our journey together, and for Joginder, she is showing that she is more aware of her rights than a year ago, and more able to speak up. She also feels more confident about taking control in the future, however, she is still struggling with feeling optimistic and she sometimes feels that she isn't heard, so these are areas we can try to support Joginder with going forward.