Appendix 2 – Case Study Citizens Advice Rotherham and District

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IAA registration number N201100037

Background

The client first spoke to Citizens Advice while attending Rotherham Foodbank because they were struggling financially and needed emergency food. The client lived in rented shared accommodation and had been unable to work because of an ongoing health condition. Their health had affected their ability to continue in their previous employment and they had used up the savings they previously had. They were receiving Universal Credit, including the Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity element, but were still struggling to meet their essential living costs.

The Issue

The client's immediate need was food. They were struggling financially and did not have enough money to manage until their next benefit payment, so a food parcel was arranged. During the conversation, the adviser identified that there were wider issues contributing to the client's financial situation. The client had previously applied for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) but had been unsuccessful. Their health continued to have a significant impact on their daily life and they wanted to explore making a new claim. The client was also unsure whether they were receiving the correct benefits and needed support to understand their entitlement.

Support Provided

Following the initial foodbank contact, an appointment was arranged with a Citizens Advice adviser to look at the client's benefits in more detail. A benefit check was completed and the client was given information about their Universal Credit, potential entitlement to New Style Employment and Support Allowance and making a new claim for PIP. The adviser explained that once the client received their PIP form, they could return to Citizens Advice for help completing it. After receiving the form, they returned to the foodbank and an appointment was arranged. Although the client initially missed the appointment, they later came back to the foodbank and asked for it to be rearranged.

The adviser continued working with the client and spent a further appointment completing the PIP form with them. The adviser acted as a pen while the client explained how their conditions affected them, helped organise the information required and printed supporting medical evidence to accompany the application. Throughout this period, the client continued to experience financial hardship and required further emergency food support while waiting for a decision on their PIP application. When the client later contacted the adviser about an

unrelated debt issue, they were referred directly to CARD's specialist Debt Team for further support.

Outcomes
What began as a request for emergency food developed into several months of ongoing advice and support.

The client's immediate need for food was addressed, while the foodbank setting also provided an opportunity to identify and explore the wider circumstances contributing to their financial difficulties. The client received a full benefit check and was supported to make a new PIP claim. Most importantly, when the PIP form arrived, they knew that they could return to Citizens Advice for help rather than having to complete it alone. The completed PIP application was submitted to the DWP with supporting medical evidence and the client is currently awaiting a decision.

The client has continued to return for support when new issues have arisen. Most recently, when they received a bill they did not understand because they had previously entered into a Debt Relief Order, they contacted the adviser directly and were referred to CARD's specialist Debt Team.

The case demonstrates the wider value of providing advice alongside foodbank support. An initial conversation about emergency food developed into an ongoing relationship with Citizens Advice, allowing the client to access support with benefits, financial hardship and debt as their circumstances developed.

Adviser Reflection
This client has been so engaged with the service and has worked really hard to improve their situation. They have always been really grateful for the help and support we have given them.

I have developed a wonderful relationship with this client, where they now feel completely comfortable coming to see me and talking openly about things that they may find embarrassing or difficult to discuss. It has been really rewarding to build that level of trust and to know that they feel able to come back to us when they need support.