

Context



The resident is a single female with 5 dependent children aged between 1 and 15



Due to welfare reform (the '2 child limit'), she is not entitled to Child Tax Credits for her youngest child. She rents from Your Homes Newcastle and is unemployed. She is in receipt of Income Support, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit, totalling £368.57 per week. Due to the level of her income she is affected by the benefit cap and her Housing Benefit is capped at £16.04 per week, leaving her to pay £96.31 per week in rent (which is 26% of her income)

Establishing contact



The resident engaged after just one phone call and one text message because she was worried about her debts

Work done

During their initial appointment with the resident, which was a home visit because it was during the school holidays, the Debt Specialist identified several issues that the team could provide support with:

Housing:

- The resident lives in a 3-bedroom YHN property, but due to the number of children she has she needs a 4-bedroom property. The team helped her to make an application on Tyne & Wear Homes so she could look to move. She was made eligible and is in the process of bidding for a new home
- The resident's Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) ended in March 2018 and the team made a new application, which was successful. DHP will pay her full rent (as long as her circumstances do not change) until 31 March 2019 (£2,625.01 in total). This means she is no longer at risk of homelessness. No further housing advice is required
- The resident had a large furniture pack, so the team made an application to the Supporting Independence Scheme to replace the goods in her furniture pack. This was successful and goods were awarded with a value of £1,962.83. This reduced her rent by £31.65 per week (£1,645.80 per year)

Welfare benefits:

- The team discussed if there were any health problems in the family and ensured that she was claiming all the benefits she was entitled to. No further welfare rights advice was required

Finances / debt:

- The team identified that she had £14,959.20 of debt for Council Tax, gas, water rates, mobile phones, catalogues and unsecured loans. The team discussed her options with her and she decided on a Debt Relief Order (DRO). Her DRO was successful and £14,959.20 of debt was written off. She is now free of debt and can look to start a savings account. No further debt advice is required. The Debt Specialist also provided budgeting support to help her to avoid falling into debt again

Employment

- The resident's youngest child is 1 year old so the DWP don't expect her to look for work for another 4 years. However, she asked for a referral to the Employment Specialist to help her to review her options and potential training to improve her employability