

## Appendix 1

### Introduction

1. As a result of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and a report to Members of the Adult Select Committee in May 2012 it was agreed that there is a need to provide particular groups of people in Surrey with advice, information and support about their benefit entitlement. This is over and above that offered through generic providers of advice such as Age UK Surrey and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). Initial funding of £500,000 was from Whole Systems Funding (Adult Social Care budget) in 2013/14, and it will be funded by Whole Systems Funding in 2014/15 and the Better Care Fund in 2015/16.
2. Co-design with all population groups, staff and organisations in Surrey took place during 2012 and resulted in the specification which detailed outputs and outcomes. Outputs related to one point of referral, a time line of response, where meetings should take place and using what medium (eg: telephone, email). See table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of what we set out to achieve from 01/04/13 to 31/03/14:**

You said:	We did:	Result:
Provide an accessible service	Grant providing free county wide service to all people over the age of 16 years affected by Welfare Reform, no eligibility criteria. Available at home or in a venue of your choice. Face to face meetings + online + telephone support	☺
One point of referral	Lead Provider model; online, text and telephone referrals acknowledged in 1 working day, contact made in 3 working days	☺
Continuity of support	Advisor will support people throughout the service to tribunal/appeal if necessary	☺
Skilled advisors. Good quality service	2,287 people supported with 4,918 individual benefits, many compliments and few complaints. All advisors achieved Advice Quality Standard national quality marker	Exceed expectations ☺ ☺
Achieve results	Value for money; benefit value exceed target of £1m realised £1,660,698. Cost of service to deliver per benefit issue £101.40	Exceed expectations ☺ ☺

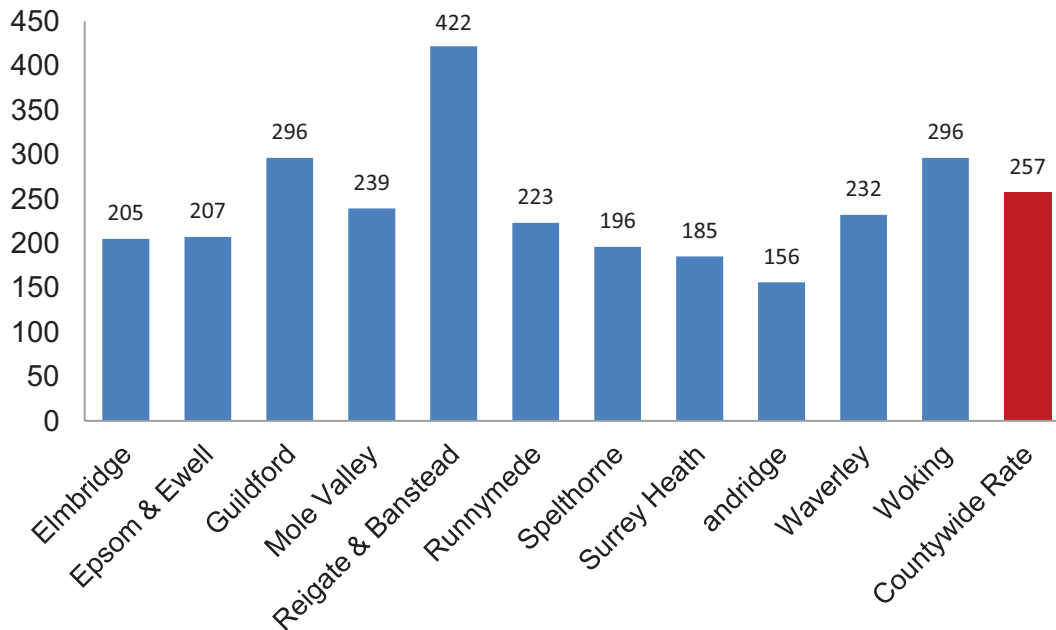
3. The tender, which followed European Union Procurement Directives, was won by a consortium of voluntary organisations led by Surrey Disabled People’s Partnership (SDPP) in conjunction with Age UK Surrey, The Youth Consortium (TYC), Guildford Action for Families (GAFs), Sight for Surrey and Deaf Positives. These are voluntary organisations which support individuals with a range of complex needs. Training and expert advice is provided by Surrey Welfare Rights Unit (SWRU) on a consultancy basis to organisations. The benefits information and advice service for individuals was available from 01/04/13 and formally launched in June 2013 as “getWIS£”.
4. On 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014 Cabinet agreed that the grant should be extended for 2014/15 and 2015/16 to SDPP as the lead provider at the current value of £500,000 per annum.

<b>Annual Performance</b>
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5. During 2013/14 there were 2,296 referrals to the service; 2,287 people progressed to receiving a service and 9 did not because they were not living in Surrey. This is an indicator that referrals to the service are made appropriately. The Welfare Reform Act has generated demand and created a need for support that requires particular skills and knowledge, as well as

additional resource which could not be met within current provision. Demand has been generated as: a) people have been subject to changes in entitlement to benefits b) media attention has highlighted benefits and created concern in people relating to their current and potential benefits. There were 4,918 individual benefit tasks delivered, on average each person was assisted with 2.15 issues.

**Table 2: Referral Rates per 100,000 population aged 18+ (comparison across District & Borough Council areas):**



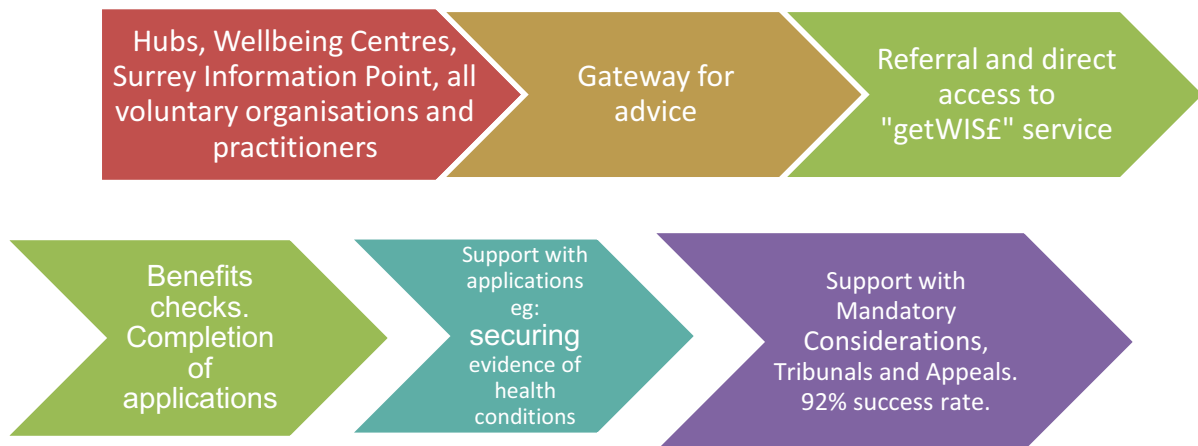
(calculation = yearly referrals per area / 18+ population x 100,000 = x ref per 100,000 population)

- Reasons why demand in Reigate and Banstead is highest is due to its population size (this borough has the second largest in the county at 12.23% of the total population). It has a number of areas of deprivation and the location of the Redhill Hub has ensured that people are signposted to the service. This supports our strategy of information being available to all residents in Surrey, in a way that ensures access to and understanding of information so that appropriate choices relating to care can be made. The Hubs act as a gateway to advice from specialist providers and account for 22% of all referrals. Guildford Borough has the largest population at 12.79% of the total Surrey population; the high referral rate is linked to the proximity of Age UK Surrey in the borough, although this is a county wide organisation.
- During the year there has been an increase in the amount of information (benefit checks) and advice people have received from 38% to 52% of all referrals. Completions of applications for welfare benefits have remained consistent at around 34% of all referrals. The number receiving support at Tribunal from quarter three has reduced from 143 to 115 in quarter 4; please see table below:

**Table 3: Activity in relation to type of support.**

Support Type	Volume Quarter 3	% of total referrals Q3	Volume Quarter 4	% of total referrals Q4	Change Q3 to Q4
Information and Advice	529	38.39%	1079	52.38%	<i>Up 103%</i>
Completion of applications	432	31.35%	692	33.59%	<i>Up 60%</i>
Appeals	171	12.41%	131	6.36%	<i>Down 23%</i>
Reconsideration	98	7.11%	31	1.50%	<i>Down 68%</i>
Tribunal	143	10.38%	115	5.58%	<i>Down 20%</i>
Upper Tribunal	5	0.36%	12	0.58%	<i>Up 140%</i>
Total	1378		2060		

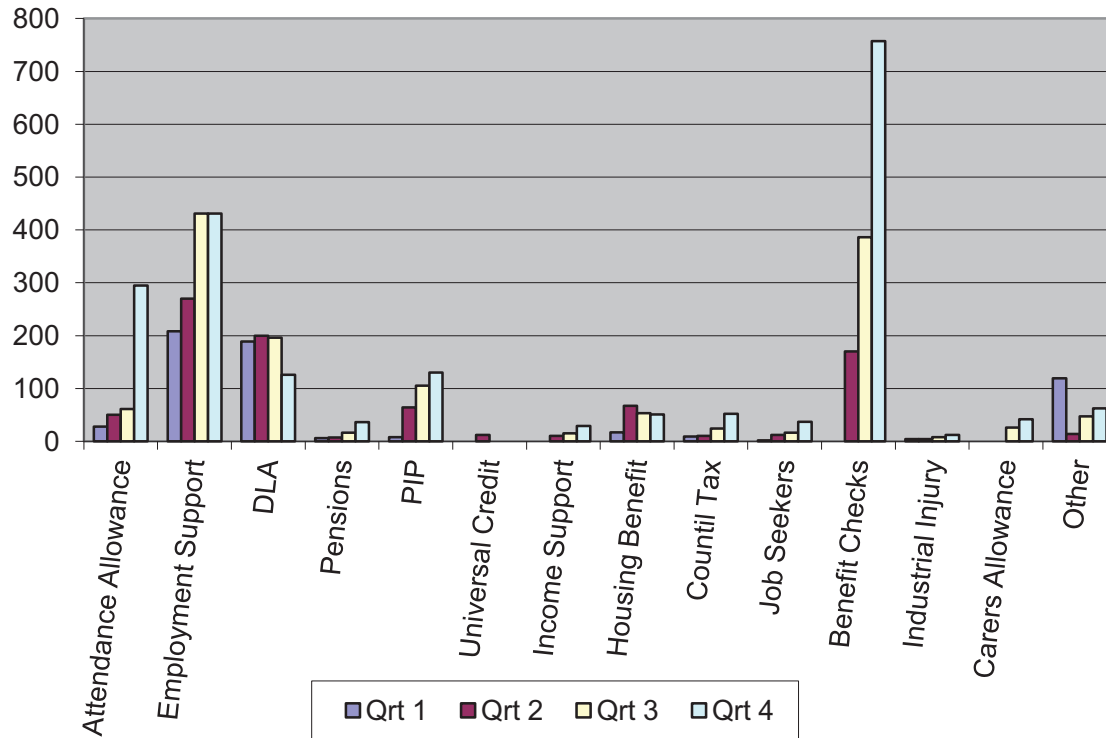
8. Welfare reforms introduced last October have inserted an additional stage to the appeals process known as a 'mandatory reconsideration'. Before an appeal can be made against a Department Work and Pensions (DWP) decision, a mandatory reconsideration has to be lodged to ask the decision maker to 'look at it again' (with additional evidence if appropriate) within a calendar month of the original decision. Only after the DWP has reconsidered its decision can an appeal be made. There are no deadlines placed on the DWP's reconsideration process which could take more than a month. "getWIS£" has a success rate at the Mandatory Reconsideration stage of 35% and 92% at the appeal hearing stage.

**Table 4: Diagrammatic representation of the current information and advice process in respect of "getWIS£"**

9. Support with employment related benefits remains consistently the highest at 1,340 for the year followed by Benefit Checks at 1,313 and then Attendance Allowance at 434. The latter had a 380% increase in the last quarter and can be directly linked to Age UK Surrey. Universal Credit has been the benefit with the least activity which is to be expected due to the

lack of roll out in Surrey by DWP. Income Support, Job Seekers and State Pension applications are benefits that have not been active. Please see table below:

**Table 5: Activity by benefit category:**



10. People most supported are working age adults from 25 to 65 years and most of the support is through the telephone followed by face to face meetings. Face to face support is increasingly taking place in community venues eg: the Hubs, and Youth Centres. The efficiency of the grant delivery has improved during each quarter which demonstrates that setting up a new service is most costly in the first quarter (see table 5). There were 4,918 individual benefit services delivered and £1,660,698 in benefits claimed during this year. Since September 2013, the average value of benefits secured per person is £3,362. The cost to support each person is £218, which equates to an average of £101.40 per benefit issue addressed. Please see table below:

**Table 6: Summary of activity by quarter and annual total:**

	Qrt 1	Qrt 2	Qrt 3	Qrt 4	Year to Date
<b>No. of new referrals (people)</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>2,296</b>
<b>No. people supported to secure welfare benefits</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>2,287</b>
<b>No. of individual benefit</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1,378</b>	<b>2,060</b>	<b>4,918</b>

categories people were supported to access/secure					
Ratio of benefit categories secured per individual	2.6	1.52	2.18	2.44	2.15
Value of benefits secured for individuals supported	£383,398	£177,764	£379,254	£720,282	£1,660,698
Number of individuals who secured benefits (value above) during the qrt	Not available	Not available	120	207	Not available
Average value of benefits secured per person	Not available	Not available	£3,160 (£379K/120 people)	£3,479 (£720K/207 people)	£3,362 (based on Q3 +4 data only)
Unit cost to support an individual	£550.66	£212.95	£197.16	£147.40	£217.77
Unit cost per benefit secured	£211.79	£140.10	£90.44	£60.41	£101.29
Contract Value	£125,000	£125,000	£125,000	£125,000	£500,000

### Case Studies

11. Case studies demonstrate that this is a complex service that delivers holistic outcomes. This case demonstrates the complexities of people reliant on benefits particularly in relation to illness:

#### Case Two during Quarter 4:

12. John was receiving Employment Support Allowance (ESA) since he became ill and he received a letter from Department of Work and Pensions informing him that his ESA claim was ending on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013. He did not know what to do and furthermore his wife was diagnosed with cancer, had been working and was now off on long term sick leave. John's wife Jane was advised by her employer to resign on medical grounds as she could not continue working. John was really anxious about this as he felt that his wife might not be able to claim ESA if she gave up her job.

13. I arranged an appointment with John and his wife, carried out a family benefits check. John's ESA had stopped due to him turning 65 and was supported to apply for Attendance Allowance. He however was not eligible to apply for Pension Credit due to savings. John will be eligible to claim his state pension in a few weeks' time.

14. Jane was supported to apply for ESA and to complete a Work Capability Assessment. She is currently receiving ESA and continues to receive medical treatment. She also receives Disability Living Allowance. John and Jane do not drive and so I let them know about applying for free bus passes

to promote their inclusion and independence within the local community. They found the process easy to complete and said they would both apply.

15. This has given both Jane and John peace of mind as they will continue having an income to live on, time to focus on treatment and more freedom to travel around.

Please see end of report for a selection of case studies and compliments.

16. There have been 4 verbal complaints due to timelessness of the service, all have been responded to and resolved.

17. Selections of compliments are as follows:

“We are writing to you about the advisor who helped our son. He has been incredibly helpful and supportive and we are humbled by his dedication and his compassion that he shown to our son and ourselves at this very difficult time in our lives. Though we have thanked him personally for his help we thought it was only right to let you know what a wonderful service you provide for people in need of expert advice and support”

“Hopefully I can start building a better future for myself now you have helped me resolve some issues”

“Thank you for visiting yesterday, we’re very grateful for your help and wish I knew about you before I had to do my appeal with my partners help.”

“It would have helped me not to stress so much about it all. We are very pleased you have done the appeal application and worded it far better than we could have done. I have printed a copy off.”

### Partnership Working

18. Partnership working across other organisations has been successful, for instance:

- ✓ relationships with staff at the Job Centre Plus are constructive and accommodating in resolving issues with claimants especially when appointments have been missed due to anxiety
- ✓ referrals are frequently and appropriately made to Food Banks, housing authorities, other voluntary organisations and the Council’s Local Assistance Scheme
- ✓ Citizen Advice Bureaux (CAB) have made 27 direct referrals to “getWIS£” and 55 people were signposted from CAB. A direct referral is when “getWIS£” is contacted by an advisor and signposting is when people are given information about the service and make direct contact. “getWIS£” has signposted 16

people to the CAB for assistance with budgeting, debt management and/or family law. Advisor to advisor working between CAB and “getWIS£” is very positive, SDPP continue to develop a mutually beneficial working relationship with CAB

- ✓ Representation from “getWIS£” on the Council’s Welfare Reform Coordination Group (WRCG) and to Members Enquiries has provided insight into the difficulties associated with benefit advice and information. “getWIS£” are able to inform WRCG as to trends and receive information from members of this group. Networking through these meetings has enabled closer working with the DWP and voluntary organisations eg: SDPP have been invited to speak at Surrey Benefit Manager’s meetings.

## Risks

19. The following risks should be noted:

- A. Staffing across the service will be at capacity of 11,5 FTE by June 2014, volunteers (20 in May 2014) are being recruited and trained, currently there is no waiting list for services. Monitoring has indicated that capacity for this service will be reached if the number of referrals are maintained or continue to grow; we are approaching a tipping point when people may be waiting for a service. The situation will be monitored and every effort made to prevent a waiting list.
- B. Delays in welfare reform delivery. The DWP has confirmed that it is taking between 21 and 26 weeks to make a decision on new claims for the Personal Independence Payment with a backlog of over 200,000 applications still awaiting a decision. The implementation of the first stage of Disability Living Allowance reassessment has also been delayed and is now being rolled out on a postcode basis – Surrey is not currently included. There are still approximately 250,000 ‘old’ incapacity benefit cases awaiting ESA reassessment that should have been completed by April 2014. Changes to the implementation timetable of Universal Credit mean that it is unlikely to affect Surrey until sometime in 2015-16, with the most complex cases unlikely to be assessed until 2017-18. All these issues are likely to result in an increased amount of additional work being ‘stockpiled’ for “getWIS£” to deal with considerably later than expected.
- C. The implementation of Universal Credit is being rolled out at a slower pace than originally planned and will not impact Surrey until mid 2015 with a focus on single able-bodied unemployed people. The more complex Universal Credit categories (like Employment Support Allowance) will only be integrated into Universal Credit in 2017 at the earliest. As the grant funding will cease in April 2016 it is possible that there will be a gap in service for this vulnerable group.
- D. The implementation of the Care Act 2014 places a requirement on the Local Authority to provide advice and information. There is concern that the current staffing arrangements in the Finance and Benefits Team, particularly on the retirement of their Benefits and Charging Consultant, may not have the required resources and expertise to meet demand.



## Conclusions:

20. Whilst it took some time for the service to become fully operational the delivery of the volume of benefits (to a very high quality standard) supports the decision of Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014 to award the grant to “getWIS£” for a further 2 year term. This service has achieved a successful outcome for a very large number of vulnerable people in Surrey across a wide range of age and need.

## Recommendations

21. The Committee is asked to recommend the following:

- Notes the report, including the progress made by getWis£ in their first year of operation and the programme of activities planned by SDPP to enhance this universal offer.

## Next steps:

22. “getWIS£” will focus publicity and awareness on areas where demand could be greater (eg: Spelthorne) and work with their partners to achieve the same. The employment of another full time advisor will allow for expansion into these areas and community venues to reach populations at risk.

23. SDPP are engaging an apprentice who will focus on promotion using social media and methods of outreach that are likely to reach target populations eg: lone parents.

24. SDPP are expanding their volunteer support and have the availability of support and advice on Saturdays.

25. The grant will continue to be awarded to “getWIS£” FOR 2014/15 and 2015/16 with the same rigorous level of monitoring. Interest from Member and Offices in the management of welfare reform will remain heightened. In light of the above risks it is likely there will be a gap in service provision if this grant ceases to be funded by 01/04/16 and no other advice, information or support service is put in place.

26. With the implementation of the Care Act it is highly likely that there will be increased demand for information and advice from the public. There are several clauses within the Act where improved or increased access to information and advice is a requirement of the Local Authority. “getWIS£” is an excellent example how we are able to meet this requirement but we can expect the advent of the Act to increase demand as publicity and expectations rise. It is likely that people would want to check their entitlement and access support if they are under claiming. Monitoring of this grant will identify demand.

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**Sources/background papers:** Monitoring notes “getWIS£”  
Report by Toni Carney to Adult Select Committee May 2012

**Consulted:**

Anne Butler, Commissioning, SCC  
Toni Carney, Benefits and Charging, SCC  
Alaster Clader, Benefits and Charging, SCC  
Paul Carey-Kent, Finance, SCC  
Jean Boddy, Commissioning, SCC  
Mary Burguières, Chief Executives Office, SCC  
Kashif Mirza, Chief Executives Office, SCC  
Clive Wood, Surrey Disable People’s Partnership  
Caroline Kalmanovitch, Business Intelligence, SCC  
Dina Bouwmeester, Policy and Strategy, SCC  
Nicola Sinnett, Adult’s Procurement, SCC

## Selection of Case Studies:

### Case Study 1:

#### **What was the situation before / what was the nomination or award for?**

I received a referral from one of our Hubs, about a lady who wanted support with her Job centre appointment. She suffers from anxiety and panic attacks and unable to go to unfamiliar places without support.

#### **What did you do or change that made a difference / got you a nomination or award? (what was your input into the situation)**

When I contacted the lady, she advised that she has recently moved to Surrey following a breakdown in a previous relationship and she had no friends or support network in the county. She advised she had an appointment at the job centre during the week and she was anxious about it and will need support at the appointment. I reassured her that we will be able to support her at the appointment and updated her about the recent benefit changes and what will be expected of her at the appointment during the week. With her permission, I also contacted the Hub for a request for information on local groups – she used to do arts and crafts and so my colleagues at the Hub sent her some information so that she could contact them.

#### **What difference has been made? (what outcomes were achieved as a result of your input)**

At the job centre appointment with her disability advisor, she was able to gain her confidence and explain to the advisor what level of support she will like as she is new to the area. She was very pleased with the support she got from us and in her feedback to us, she said *'my life has changed dramatically and next week I will attend the ESA job support appointment, my fear has gone! And not only am I back to myself, but am also free to be better. Looking forward to joining a new pottery class'*. This also shows that our service empowers people to be more independent in their lives.

### Case Study 2:

#### **What was the situation before / what was the nomination or award for?**

A lady was interested in our service as she was unable to work due to caring role undertaken for her adult son over a number of years. As part of the caring role, she had to deal with her son's increasingly bad behaviour.

She had on a couple of occasions asked for a care assessment to be undertaken for son and herself. Neither was forthcoming. Finally she found herself having to defend herself from her son's bad behaviour which led to police involvement.

She attended a Drop-in session, feeling a sense of bereavement almost as her purpose in life, her caring role, was no longer. The individual, who had until the point of the police involvement, had been in receipt of Carer's Allowance (CA) & Income Support (IS). Now, needed to urgently consider claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) or finding a job.

**What did you do or change that made a difference / got you a nomination or award? (what was your input into the situation)**

Support was provided in claiming ESA. We determined that due to individual's depression that finding a job, or claiming JSA was not the way forward for her at that time. Whilst in receipt of CA & IS individual's mortgage housing costs were paid. They were very concerned that Department of Work and Pensions would not continue providing this assistance. A lot of reassurance, and couple of telephone calls later, it was accepted that housing costs would be covered for the time being.

Regarding the lack of care assessment for both: the lady was encouraged to pursue her complaint (with her community care advocate) which had already been instigated. They were provided with the opportunity to contact her advocate at the hub in order to pursue this. As a consequence, the complaint about the lack of care assessment is now in progress.

Before Christmas, she attended Drop-in again holding a letter, which threatened to cut off her electricity along with threats of fines etc. In order to achieve a suitable outcome, urgent negotiations were entered into.

Eventually, having first being told that she would need to pay £60.00 a week, (despite having explained that they were actually in receipt of ESA), an outcome, suitable to the individual was achieved with a much reduced, manageable repayment.

**What difference has been made? (what outcomes were achieved as a result of your input)**

The above outcomes for each issue have relieved the individual of much stress and anxiety. By breaking down each issue and tackling separately we managed to overcome the entire situation – when looked at as a whole this was completely overwhelming.

Case Study 3:

**What was the situation before / what was the reason for referral?**

The individual is a 93 year old man who lives alone and has multiple medical conditions. He is registered as partially sighted following ischaemic optic neuropathy in his left eye and also has macular degeneration. He has had three hip operations and as a result has mobility issues. He takes various medications for his conditions and was having difficulty managing his daily care needs. He was relying on a kindly neighbour to help and support him with various tasks such as monitoring and taking medication, carrying out shopping etc as he could no longer undertake these tasks independently.

**What did you do or change that made a difference / got you a nomination or award? (what was your input into the situation)**

I visited him to discuss his needs and to ensure he was in receipt of all necessary aids to assist with his day to day requirements. I completed the application form for Attendance Allowance on his behalf and submitted it to the Department of Work and Pensions.

**What difference has been made? (what outcomes were achieved as a result of your input)**

He has been awarded the lower rate Attendance Allowance and has now employed an assistant which he organised through AGE UK to help with the day to day domestic chores. He pays a quarterly fee to AGE UK and pays the individual weekly.

He has to attend the hospital on a very regular basis and is now able to pay for a taxi to take him.

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