

Things could scarcely be going worse for Mark*, a war veteran whose experiences revisit him in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder, and who suffers from a severe heart condition. He lived alone in a rented second floor flat where his disabilities meant it took 2 hours to bath and negotiate the stairs. Being unable to work, he depended on Universal Credit and even with foodbank vouchers he was finding it difficult to make ends meet. He asked Citizens Advice Rural Cambs (CARC) if they could help.

Although Universal Credit was being claimed, CARC found that because of his physical and mental health conditions, Mark was entitled to an uplift of this benefit, this extra part of Universal Credit is aimed at helping where “daily living tasks” and/or “mobility issues” are difficult.

Personal Independence Payment was another benefit Mark was entitled to because of his health conditions, which is not means tested. Entitlement varies according to the severity of the claimant’s condition; these two payments together have meant Mark now receives about £190 extra per week.

Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment are accessed via the Department for Work and Pensions, but local councils also have help available too in the form of essential living grants, and CARC helped access these funds and prepare Mark’s successful claim for a Discretionary Housing Payment to help with his housing costs.

Social housing lettings in Cambridgeshire are managed by an organisation called Home-link, a nationwide association of social housing providers. Home-link manages applications for new tenants, so recognising the unsuitability of his current accommodation CARC helped Mark register with Home-link. There is obviously a queue for social housing, but to accommodate the neediest, applications are assessed into bands. Based on the medical evidence presented, Mark’s was classified as “Band A - Urgent” and a new bungalow was offered after just three months.

Mark’s actual move required additional support through other local sources of help which deserves more recognition. The Trussell Trust is a national co-ordinator of foodbanks and is well known. Cambridge Aid, which is a local, small and entirely volunteer based charity, also supported Mark. Through various avenues Mark was helped with the funds for a removal van and a man to get him into his new home.

CARC has not resolved all of Mark’s difficulties, but its work has ensured that he can live in surroundings matching his needs.

*** Not his real name**

For free, independent, impartial advice and support you can contact Citizens Advice Rural Cambs:

- **Adviceline: 0808 278 7807**
Monday to Friday 09:30 to 15:30
- **Universal Credit Help to Claim line:** 0800 1448444, for anyone seeking to make a new claim for Universal Credit

- **Webchat or Email via:** www.citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk
- **Information also available on our website at** www.citizensadvicerruralcambs.org.uk or at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

-Ends -

Note to editors:

For more information contact: Nick Blencowe, Chief Officer

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- **Citizens Advice Rural Cambs is an independent local charity supporting residents in Fenland and Huntingdonshire providing free independent, confidential and impartial advice which is available to all regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age or nationality.**
- **We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem.**
- **Our aim is to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.**
- **Citizens Advice is made up of the national charity; the network of independent local Citizens Advice charities across England and Wales; the Citizens Advice consumer service; and the Witness Service.**