

HARC Case Studies 2023

Case Study 1

The client is the main carer for her adult son and at the time of application was also caring for her father. She felt she couldn't cope with the additional stress she was feeling as a result of trying to claim Universal Credit (UC) for her son. She found the whole process of applying for benefits extremely stressful and unclear, *"I couldn't have done it without HARC's support"*. Before approaching HARC, she was given conflicting information from various sources. She was initially told to apply for Employment Support Allowance but was refused and was then told to claim Universal Credit. The DWP helpline gave different answers depending on who she spoke to. Following a UC Limited Capability for Work (LCW) assessment her son's UC was stopped. She was forced to appeal and attend a tribunal, which she found terrifying. The information that the decision had been based on was full of errors.

She found the LCW assessment very difficult as the questions asked of her son were personal and embarrassing for him to answer. The process was undermining for her son and the results were inaccurate. She explained that, due to his learning support needs, her son often had a different perception of the question being asked of him which meant he gave inaccurate answers. *"I tried to indicate this to the nurse carrying out the assessment without undermining my son, but this was not picked up on by the nurse. The assessment was also very long, and it was difficult for my son to sit through an hour of questions. If I hadn't have spoken to HARC, I would have given up. He is 34 and lives with me. I am in my 70s and I am tired. I am fortunate that I can support him financially, but I want to ensure that he can be financially independent. Working with HARC has given me the strength and confidence to move forward."*

Case Study 2

The client suffered a life changing accident. As a result, he lost his leg and his sight in one eye. Being self-employed and not able to work, he battled with the DWP but was so overwhelmed by the trauma of the accident he couldn't cope, and his mental health was in crisis. The hospital contacted HARC, and help was immediately on hand. They came round when they said they would, answered his calls, and explained everything with compassion. This was in stark contrast to his experience with the DWP where he described being passed from pillar to post and getting lost in their call centres. *"Every benefits call previously without*

HARC's support was like banging my head against a brick wall." It caused him to fall into deep depression, often experiencing suicidal thoughts.

HARC have helped him get the benefits he needs. For the time being he feels mentally stronger and is able to give his mum and dad money for rent, as he now has to live with them whilst he recovers from the accident. HARC's support is helping him work towards living independently again.

Case Study 3

The client needed HARC as he felt completely lost with the form filling and wasn't sure if his case was reasonable. He won the PIP appeal and now has the confidence to commit to paying for the therapy he needs to improve his mobility. He described the healthcare assessment as *"horrendous – full of loaded questions, felt like they had an agenda to refuse [me], wasn't impartial and they were cherry picking info to suit their agenda."*

Case Study 4

After caring for her terminally ill husband who tragically died, the client experienced a life changing injury causing 9 fractures (including her neck and back). She was on morphine for 9 months and had to navigate the welfare system when most of the day she was unable to stay awake, and when she was awake, she was very confused. She thought of killing herself often.

She made notes during her PIP interview and reports that her interviewer lied several times. She described the assessor getting angry and frustrated, and shouting at her when she struggled with some questions due to the effects of her medication.

When she was in terrible pain at night, she said it was often HARC that got her through the bad times – *"they always had my back, never gave up, and kept me going."*

As a result of the evidence HARC gathered, she won the appeal and was given a 10 year award.

Case Study 5

The client has been in temporary accommodation since the age of 13 and had constant battles with the welfare system. This has been a cause of her acute mental health challenges – panic attacks, anxiety, and depression. HARC helped her get her PIP reconsidered and awarded for 5 years. *"Never have I known people to be so patient, just having someone there to have my back really changed my life. Before I met HARC the benefits system was ruining my life, holding me back from trying to get educated and get myself a career."*

Testimonials

"I would have given up if it hadn't been for HARC. I have long covid and am housebound. I have never received benefits before and didn't understand the benefits system or know what I was entitled to or how to go about claiming. I was so scared. It was so frightening. My health was really bad, and I had trouble comprehending what the forms meant and what was being asked of me. I suffered with anxiety and depression. It was a very stressful time. You don't get told what you are entitled to and without someone telling you, how do you know what you can claim? Without the support of HARC I would have given up. I was using food banks and was afraid to turn the heating on. Having support from HARC was like having a massive weight lifted. Without their support I would have had to sell my house and could have ended up homeless. I felt ashamed at first. I have never been in debt and have never claimed benefits, but they were so understanding, and I didn't feel degraded."

"It is so hard to get the benefits you are entitled to without HARC – it shouldn't be this way".

"I found myself unable to work after 45 years and didn't know anything about claiming income. HARC completed the forms on my behalf as I am unable to write or type."

"I love going to HARC, they explain everything so clearly to me. Without them, I would not be able to cope or get the financial support I need".

"Support from HARC enabled me to get my medical diagnosis and took the pressure off doing the appeal process so I could concentrate on my health. After a significant medical issue this was extremely helpful. Without HARC's support I would have been unable to appeal. I couldn't have done it without them. I would have had to sell my flat it would have been major. Getting PIP meant I could stay in my home."

"If it wasn't for HARC I would have been using foodbanks and had no heating as [my] boiler packed up and I couldn't afford a new one. I can't tell you how grateful I am to them. I now have benefits I never realised I was entitled to".

"The health assessors didn't listen or understand my IBS, my non-diagnosed autism and how ill it makes me. I got so withdrawn in covid and went through trauma as my aunt committed suicide. They didn't think any of this should affect me and the experience was very traumatic. Before HARC it was on my mind 24/7. The process took so long, I got into debt, living by increasing overdraft, credit card debt and rent in arrears. With the successful appeal, I got a

back payment that paid off all my debts and now I am having counselling to help me with my mental health. I wouldn't want to see anyone go through [what] I went through."

"HARC has been a god send and literally saved my life. Without their help with benefits, I would have lost my home, and my fragile mental health would have collapsed. Just knowing that they are always on the end of the phone is a huge comfort and helps me manage my mental health as a result. I would not be on this planet if they hadn't been there for me".

"I have been to HARC twice [they] were amazingly helpful. [Previously] I was fit and healthy with a job as an outdoor activity provider. I was going through treatment for cancer, and navigating the benefits system on top of this was extremely stressful, and I had my benefits stopped. HARC helped me get the benefits I was entitled to."

"HARC helped me fill out the forms which meant I could get the benefits I was entitled to. Due to my autism, I find the language in the forms very difficult to understand. I would have struggled without them; I would not have been able to do it on my own."

"HARC have supported me a number of times when I have had my benefits taken away. Without their help I don't think I would be here."

"HARC were very sympathetic and understanding. My medical needs are very sensitive and not always easy to explain. HARC were very discreet and kind which I really appreciated."

"I have worked all my life so when I found myself in need of having to apply for benefits it was completely new to me. I had real trouble with the forms. HARC supported me so much in getting these done and understanding the process. I would be working if I could, this is not my life plan. Despite having a lifelong degenerative condition which is not getting better I have to reapply for my benefits every two years. I have a lifelong condition and should receive a longer award and not have to reapply every two years. I went through a tribunal which was the worst and most stressful experience of life. My HARC advisor thinks I should be getting more money than I do but I am scared to challenge the outcome in case they take away what I have at the moment."

"It is such a demeaning process and really horrible having to keep explaining your illness. HARC help rise above that. HARC help you navigate a very difficult and complex system, they give you the language to use. I would be in extreme debt without their support."

"I couldn't work and had to survive on basic UC. I wouldn't have appealed had it not been for HARC, I would have just given up."

"HARC have helped me with my benefits claims. If I didn't have access to HARC I wouldn't be able to get my benefits. Because of my dyslexia I was unable to understand or complete the forms. Without their help I would not be getting the benefits I am entitled to. I was supposed to have reading support in places and access to a course to help with my dyslexia but none of this was put in place by DWP. I was asked questions like, 'do I enjoy gardening'. My mobility is so bad I can't do physical things like gardening, my condition means I keep collapsing. I went to court and the judge awarded me 2 years back pay and couldn't believe that I had received no support. The judge said they can't reassess me for another two years."

"The health assess[or] twisted the information I was giving. HARC supported me emotionally as well as all the form filling. My health issues (acute arthritis) haven't changed as a result of getting PIP, but life is more comfortable, and I can buy things to help my condition now".

"The health assessors don't look at your history [they] just look at the present. If you have any kind of disability and say you leave the house, they think you are fine. If it wasn't for HARC (I have used them 3 times now) so many people would be massively struggling."

"[The Advisor] at HARC saved our lives, we would have been homeless without HARC."

"HARC are fantastically excellent rather than just excellent, they are understatedly fabulous. They were my guiding saviour when I suffered a life changing injury, got myself badly into debt and didn't have anyone to turn to for help. If it hadn't been for them, I would not have made it out of the black hole I was stuck in. I would have killed myself".

"HARC is the best place I have ever been to; I will never ever forget them."

"Before HARC helped me, I never knew how to cope from one week to the next. I missed out on my PIP as I just turned 65 years of age but managed to get Attendance Allowance which helps. I still have to rob Peter to pay Paul, only manage to eat one meal a day and now running up debt due to cost of living."

"I had been turned down for PIP, suffering with long covid and struggling with suicide idealisation. HARC took the mental load off me. Experiencing long covid meant I was no longer employed, and my world was turned upside down for me and my three children. I was constantly exhausted. Without HARC I would have given up – no doubt about it."

RELIEVING POVERTY
ADDRESSING INEQUALITY
IMPROVING WELLBEING
FIGHTING INJUSTICE