

Changing Attitudes

Elaine's Story

Elaine used to work for the BBC and then became a social worker, working at a psychiatric day centre. She is not currently working but is volunteering at her local NHS trust. Elaine had depression, anxiety, and mobility issues. She was helped by Age UK's Advice Line to apply for PIP (she was previously on DLA). The Advice Line signposted her to Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent, where she attends the monthly Carib Club..

Disabilities and benefits

"I contacted Age UK's Advice Line in September, October, last year about my finances. They made an appointment for me to have a telephone assessment and I had to complete a financial sheet myself prior to that appointment. And then they sent me some information about the relevant benefits. And I subsequently went through it and that was the PIP, the personal independence payment. I'm now waiting for the result."

"I'm on medium care and lower mobility on the DLA. That needed to be altered, and that's why they said, go for the PIP. My main disability is mobility in my left leg and my back. I've got osteoarthritis in the left knee, and I can't walk for too long or climb stairs easily. It hasn't got to the stage where they want to operate yet. However, I've also got gallstones, which they are going to operate on within the next three or four months. That causes me a lot of pain. I also suffer from anxiety and depression. When I'm very depressed, I can't leave the house."

Finding the Carib Club

"Age UK's Advice Line gave me details for the local branch: Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent (HHB). I rang them and they told me about the Carib Club. I tried to find it in January this year but got lost. I went by public transport and that was very difficult because it was a long walk from the bus stop and someone gave me directions and directed me to the wrong place. So I was walking around for too long. I wanted to use the toilet and in the end I just gave up and went home."

"And then I met the son of one of the volunteers. He spoke to his mum and gave me directions and everything so I could find it, so I started coming in February. I came in a taxi, and there was poetry and a music quiz. Then there was jewellery making in March, when I drove there. There's always music in the background, which is very nice. Nice music from the '60s and '70s. And it's different activities each time. Next time we're going to make Easter cards because we're coming up for Easter."

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"Although I was born in England, my mother and grandparents are from Jamaica, so I thought I'd have a connection with people from the Caribbean. It's important for Caribbean people, for Indian people and for people of other cultural backgrounds to have their own groups, as it validates one's identity."

"I look forward to the Carib Club, and I'd like to say thank you very much to Juliet and the volunteers for providing a wonderful service. There's always a warm welcome. I remember the first time I came, they were looking out for me and I had a very nice welcome, and the other people in the group were also very welcoming."

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Appreciation

"I look forward to the Carib Club, and I'd like to say thank you very much to Juliet and the volunteers for providing a wonderful service. There's always a warm welcome. I remember the first time I came, they were looking out for me and I had a very nice welcome, and the other people in the group were also very welcoming. I met a couple of people who I knew previously. One I didn't know her name, and another person I knew from about 20 years ago."

Other Age UK HHB clubs

"I want to try out the IT because I'm not brilliant on the computer, but I haven't got around to going yet. There is a music group as well, a vinyl club or something like that. That sounds quite interesting, but as yet I've only tried out the Carib Club."