

Legal/police: A couple were arrested due to safeguarding concerns about their baby that were identified on a hospital visit. Couple were arrested at 6pm on Thursday evening. On Friday morning around 11am, the police made contact with CDA because they were unable to find interpreters to read the couple their rights, to interview them or to support them emotionally and mentally. Our Advocate was able to attend the police station at 4.30pm on Friday as an urgent visit. The Advocate made sure the police were aware of their responsibilities of booking interpreters and explained very clearly how to make sure interpreters were booked for interviews with Deaf people. The Advocate checked in on both parents to see if there was any urgent, well-being needs that needed to be attended to. Mother needed her anxiety tablets from home and her asthma inhaler as she had been struggling in the cell overnight. Father was ok but both were very emotional as they didn't fully understand about why they were taken into custody or what was happening with their son. Advocate sat in on both interviews once a remote interpreter was finally booked through "The Big Word." Advocate was able to support communication between the client and the interpreter when colloquialisms or idiosyncratic signs were used. Advocate also supported the couple to understand the process and the bail conditions. The couple were extremely grateful as they hadn't had anyone communicate with them in 22 hours and finally understood what was going on. The custody time had to be extended (Via special sergeant approval) a further 8 hours to ensure the police had time to interview them. The couple finally left the station at 2am in the morning (Saturday).

Housing: Deaf lady who has learning difficulties. She has basic level of understanding English so reading letters can be really difficult for her. She was victim of coercion and control and financial abuse by her boyfriend. Boyfriend began claiming housing benefits on his hostel in her name. This meant that housing benefit stopped paying for her house. She built up arrears of £3700.

Housing sent her a number of letters, warnings and a notice of seeking possession. Her boyfriend told her not to worry about these.

Finally, housing contacted CDA to ask someone to support her to understand the risk of losing her home.

CDA Advocate visited the house and supported her to understand all the letters and why this had happened. She said that her boyfriend told her the arrears had built up from her 17-year old son not paying the rent.

Advocate attended the court date with her and was able to postpone the court due to lack of interpreter in the court. Advocates have then been working hard with her to understand how to apply for Universal Credit to ensure housing benefit and council tax reduction and discretionary housing benefit was still able to be re-instated. Advocates have worked hard on creating a visual time table of when the payments need to be made to pay off the arrears, supported for the Direct debit to be set up. Universal credit has now been approved and the rent has agreed to be paid directly to the landlord to reduce the chance of getting into debt again.