

Healthy Futures

A para-professional service providing social interventions for patients with complex needs

Healthy Futures supports people with a broad range of social needs. Gateway's Navigators work alongside other services and organisations to provide patients aged 18+ with one-to-one, tailored support.

GPs can refer anyone who needs non-medical support into the service, so that includes people who need help with issues such as:

- isolation and social support
- benefits, debt and housing
- low mood and wellbeing
- management of long term conditions

Whether someone just needs a cup of tea and a friendly chat to get through the day, or has complex needs that require a range of specialist help, Healthy Futures is a "one stop shop" into which south Birmingham GPs can refer patients.

"Healthy Futures is a brilliant idea which is a real value supporting patients, and is needed. I hope this is something that is kept moving forward."

Susan Harris,
Practice Manager,
Selly Oak Health Centre



Case Study: Diane

- social isolation
- financial hardship
- unhealthy diet
- little to no exercise

"We helped Diane to become less socially isolated"

When Diane was referred to Healthy Futures and first met her Navigator, Judith, they talked about how her ill health and learning difficulties affect her everyday life. For example, cooking is hard because she can't stand for long, finds it hard to grip a knife, and sometimes forgets when things are in the oven. She finds using the phone stressful and struggles with reading, and so finds it difficult to manage bills. She told Judith her main concern was money, and that she would like more people to talk to.

One of the first things Judith did was to phone the DWP to begin the process of claiming for PIP (Personal Independence Payments) to help ease Diane's financial pressures. Diane had also heard about a class she wanted to attend, so together they worked out which buses she could take to get there. They also talked about ways in which she could save money, perhaps by changing energy suppliers. Over the next few visits, Judith helped Diane set up a simple filing system, and phoned banks and utilities to set up new arrangements for her bills. She helped her to fill in the application forms for PIP, and then to understand the many letters she received relating to the application.

We often find that it takes some time before the people we work with feel able to be completely honest about financial hardship and, indeed, it was a couple of months before Judith found out just how little Diane was living on. She was going days without food and had stopped going out because she couldn't afford bus fare. However, after an assessment, Diane's PIP application was declined. Judith gave Diane some emergency help – bus money from our Hardship Fund, and food parcels from our food bank – and continued to fight for a longer-term solution, contacting other services in Birmingham for advice, and writing more letters to the DWP.

After the application was refused a second and third time, Diane's appeal for PIP went to court. With the help of a specialist adviser, Judith and Diane gathered as much evidence as they could. Seven months after they first met, Judith accompanied Diane to a tribunal where she was – finally – awarded a "daily living" payment.

When Diane's support from Judith ended, she continued to see a Gateway Befriender every now and again for phased-down support. Thanks to Judith pushing for PIP, Diane can now afford food and bus fare, so she's started going regularly to local classes and clubs, where she meets people for coffee and the occasional dance. Her health is improving and she feels much happier. Her paperwork still causes her some anxiety, but she's much more organised and feels able to cope with everyday life.

Healthy Futures is provided by Gateway Family Services, a community interest company with over a decade of experience providing one-to-one support to vulnerable people in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands.

Call Gateway Family Services to find out more: 0121 456 7820

