

Eileen* stays put

Eileen loves her Colliers Wood flat. A widow in her late 70s, her 1 bedroom, ground floor flat is near her daughter and her family, the shops and everything she needs. Fiercely independent, she refused to apply for bereavement benefit when her husband died. Her medical conditions sometimes stop her from carrying out everyday tasks.

Helped by Housing Benefit and Pension Credit, she was able to pay the rent and make ends meet and has no outstanding debts. Towards the end of last year, her landlady's agent contacted her wanting to increase the rent by £200 per month. Eileen could not afford this increase. After some to-ing and fro-ing between the agent, the landlady and Eileen, the increase was reduced to £150 – still out of reach.

Desperate to stay in her much loved flat, but worried about how she could afford the increased rent, Eileen came to us. We helped her check her eligibility for Attendance Allowance and showed her how to fill in the application form and return it to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). She seemed reluctant to do this, saying that the process appeared very intrusive and would increase her stress levels unbearably. We also told her how to apply to Merton Council for Discretionary Housing Payment. She agreed to take the completed form and all of the required evidence to the Merton Council offices in Morden to be processed.

We invited her to contact us again if her applications were unsuccessful. We would then look further at the changes she could make to allow her to manage each month's extra rent. We said that if that did not work then we would help her look at other housing options such as sheltered housing provided by Merton Council.

*Name and identifying details have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

