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The Paperweight Trust

BY MICAELA BLITZ

The Coronavirus crisis has had a profound effect on people in many ways and for some it has caused significant financial strain. Whether through loss of income, family fragmentation, post bereavement being put on furlough or in some cases being made redundant, there is a lot of uncertainty in the current climate which can lead to additional stress and worry. Obtaining the right advice and support to be able navigate through these issues can often be difficult, but The Paperweight Trust offers a free confidential service for guidance on post bereavement, family law, financial, welfare and legal issues. Established in 2010 with offices in London, Manchester and most recently Gateshead, The Trust is open and available to people from across the Jewish spectrum.

Since the start of the pandemic, The Paperweight Trust have seen a 30% increase in the amount of calls received and expect that number to rise further over the coming months. Benjamin Conway, Chair of The Paperweight Trust explains, "Up to now, people have managed financially often by juggling their money or using their savings, but the fear is that as this situation continues more people will begin to find things difficult and may need our help. People may need to seek additional financial support to get them through these troubling times but may not know where to start. This is where we can help." The Trust offers practical support such as help with applying for loans, managing debt or understanding which benefits may be available to access. Uncomfortable aspects of life that have never previously intruded, but due to current circumstances very much beyond their control, these may now be required.

Enlisting help from the Trust is a very straightforward process which begins with an initial assessment to consider the client's personal situation. Based on this information, an appointment is arranged between the client and an allocated caseworker who would have specific expertise relating to the individual needs of the client. The Trust works with around 200 experts who all



volunteer their time and expertise to help others.

The client and caseworker would normally meet at the client's home or a mutually agreed location, but currently this is happening via Zoom or on the phone. This enables them to go through ways to deal with the client's situation and discuss a strategy in order to resolve matters. The help offered could be anything from helping to organise a household budget to making telephone calls on behalf of client to relevant organisations or departments or attending meetings with solicitors or court hearings.

Every case is different, and the time taken to resolve it successfully very much depends on what is required. But the case worker will keep the client informed throughout the process and offer guidance and help in order to achieve a successful outcome for the client. The current situation has meant that often the help required does not fit into one category or relate to one matter or a single incident, but multiple issues. As Bayla Perrin, CEO, explains, "We have seen a rise in the complexity of the cases that we are being contacted about, they really cover a whole gamut of issues, and are often interlinked in some way."

As well as facing the loss of income, some have unfortunately had to face the loss of a loved one, possibly due to Covid-19. Dealing with grief whilst also experiencing feelings such as isolation, stress and

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vulnerability can be extremely difficult especially without the support from family due to current restrictions. This can all really impact an individual's mental health and wellbeing, along with the additional stress of having to get your domestic affairs in order, it can be completely overwhelming. The Paperweight Trust can help those in this situation, including the elderly or vulnerable who may need additional assistance. The Trust often works with clients who might have been referred to them by social services, local authorities or other care organisations

For anyone who may be going through difficulties of any kind, Benjamin believes that the key to dealing with things is by seeking early intervention to avoid the problem getting worse. He says, "Ignoring letters from credit card companies or avoiding opening statements from the bank won't make them go away and there may other ways of dealing with these things which may be possible, as long as they are dealt with early on." The Trust post regular updates on support available from banks, building societies and government agencies to make sure clients have as up-to-date information, as things continue to change.

Whilst for those dealing with it, a situation may often seem insurmountable, but reaching out to The Paperweight Trust might be a step in the right direction to find a resolution. As Bayla adds, "It's definitely worth a



Bayla Perrin



Benjamin Conway

call to us, as there is always something that we can do to help. An initial conversation can already help to lighten the load. At Paperweight we understand and help you to realise that you are not alone."

To get in touch with The Paperweight Trust, check out their website - www.paperweight.org.uk or contact via email info@paperweight.org.uk or by phone on their Emergency Helpline - 0208 455 4996