

Case Study April

This month we were very worried about a woman, Ruth*, who came to see us in her early 60's, who had complex health problems and had been rough sleeping for almost two months, spending her nights on buses and trains. She was attending the Manna Centre daily and sleeping with her head on the table, appearing exhausted and unwell. Her legs were very swollen from not being able to lie down and elevate her legs for so long. She had suffered from an incredible amount of bad luck. She had been in temporary accommodation through Lambeth council but had suffered an unexpected bereavement of a close relative who had been living abroad and had to leave the UK at short notice to deal with the estate. Whilst she was away, the direct debit that she had in place paying off rent arrears to Lambeth council lapsed. This meant that when she returned, she was evicted by Lambeth council. As the temporary accommodation was based in Southwark, this had changed her local connection, and so this is where she had correctly made a new homelessness application. However, Southwark replied to say that they needed evidence that Lambeth had indeed evicted her, as proof of her homelessness, and Ruth did not know how to get this. We were able to get this for her and were eventually able to advocate to Southwark council for her to be offered further temporary accommodation. We did this by putting across the complexity and misfortune involved in her situation and advocating that it was not Ruth's fault that she became homeless (which would have rendered her intentionally homeless and not eligible for assistance). She was also able to see the nurse at the Manna Centre, who was extremely concerned about her and was able to make her an urgent appointment to see her GP, which she had been struggling to make. Ruth is now in temporary accommodation and is recovering.