

LAMBERT, Alexander - Additional Information

I have been advising with Warrington District Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) since June 2005. I work in both the Warrington and the Lymm branches, and do work with other projects as required.

As a generalist adviser, I have a good understanding of the principles of core issues such as benefits, housing, debt, employment and immigration. I am trained in looking up further details in our information system which includes our own documentation and other reference books (particularly CPAG's handbooks, Disability Rights Handbook and Lewis' Employment Law). I then explain how this information applies to the client's circumstances.

I use a holistic approach to help a client deal with underlying issues as well as presenting issues. As such, the vast majority of cases I advise on fall into one or more of the areas you highlight:

Welfare Benefits including general benefit checks, better off calculations, DLA applications and GL24 appeal forms.

Council Tax including Council Tax Benefit checks, discounts, liability and arrear repayment negotiation.

Housing including rent arrears, disrepair, deposits and housing status.

Debt including priority/non-priority distinction, financial statement, income maximisation, options (pro-rata offers, bankruptcy, IVAs etc), bailiffs and consequences.

Employment including rights at work, disciplinary and grievance procedures and employment tribunals.

Immigration including current status, basic advice about citizenship and referrals for more specialist advice.

I also deal with family and personal, consumer and many other areas.

As a student at The University of York (Oct 2001 to June 2004) I was involved in the welfare provision of both my Junior Common Room Committee (LGBT Officer 2002; Welfare Officer 2003) and my Students' Union (LGB Officer Easter 2003-June 2004), providing welfare advice through drop in sessions, and running campaigns (Safe Sex, Safe Space, Blood Transfusion Service, Personal Safety). Many of the issues I dealt with then are still relevant now (especially fees, hardship/Access to Learning funds, loans, parental support), and I keep myself up to date through the news and friends still in the Students' Union.

My verbal communication skills are effectively demonstrated through my work with clients during the advice process in my CAB work. Prior to joining the bureau, my Student Union role required me to engage in public speaking, both in prepared speeches, and unprepared answers to questions. I also deal with the public regularly through my job on the shop floor with the Co-Op.

My written skills are also used regularly in my advice work - helping clients draft letters and application forms, complaining about systems (for example, poor form design) and appealing decisions (for example Tax Credit overpayment recoverability decisions).

I am handling cases from start to finish within Warrington district. I am confident working within the structures in place (further action diaries, specialist support, administration support) to schedule future work, and can identify deadlines and priority work.

I have experience working as a non-sabbatical officer for York University Students' Union. During that time, I learnt a lot about not only my role, but the roles of the other people involved, be they elected officers or members of staff. I supported other officers in activities they were running as and when required of me. As a member of staff at The Co-op, I work as part of a team to ensure the smooth running of the store, taking responsibility for certain tasks, and assisting others with theirs. Working within organisations' policies is a big part of what I do and did, whether it's challenging underage sales, or running mandated campaigns in the SU.

I believe strongly in equality and liberation. No-one should be excluded from a service because of things beyond their control, whether it be physical, mental or cultural. I believe equal opportunities extend from the advisers and the service provision to the waiting area and tailored interview style. The service needs to be a safe space for all. Part of that is presenting a non-judgemental, non-discriminatory and approachable manner ourselves, but those aspects must also be publicised to, known of and understood by clients. This philosophy runs deep within the CAB service and I uphold it constantly.

I have been using computers and IT since an early age, and am competent in using typical office applications and job specific software with appropriate training.

I am keen to continue working in an impartial, client focused environment such as a Students' Union.