

Paperweight Perspective

Use your life experience to help others



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At the time of writing, the war in Ukraine has been ongoing for some four months and as

Boris Johnson recently remarked, we must avoid “Ukraine-fatigue”.

Since the start of hostilities in February 2022, the headlines in the media have increasingly had to share space with the domestic woes that have arisen over the months: the rise of energy prices to a point where it is envisaged that the “Energy Price Cap” will exceed £3,000 later this year; the general increase in the cost of living; inflation rising at a rate not seen for 40 years and rising interest rates. Whilst these issues affect us all to one extent or another, they are devastating to those who are in debt or rely on welfare benefits. But it gets worse: those who were barely keeping their heads above water, on the edge of the whirlpool of debt and despair, will now start to feel the inexorable tug

as they and their families are sucked into their own personal maelstrom. Sadly, it doesn't stop there, these financial difficulties will undoubtedly have knock-on effects, driving increases in both housing issues and divorce.

For those involved, the outlook is quite bleak: debt; reliance on welfare benefits; losing the roofs over their heads and possibly divorce, phrases that aren't included in the usual stereotype of the Jewish community – a view that we sometimes forget is only a stereotype and isn't universally true.

Fortunately for them, Paperweight exists

with expertise in all of these areas and more besides. It is driven by dedicated volunteers who give of their time freely to help others. This includes a professional team whose expert knowledge gives additional support in certain areas e.g. the knowledge, guidance and insight provided by the professional Social Worker has proven invaluable to me in dealing with cases.

Whilst Paperweight always welcomes financial support, we are always on the lookout for more caseworkers – most especially in the fields of Family Law, Housing, Landlord Tenancy and Benefits, to work with the increasing number of

clients who turn to us for help. From personal experience, volunteering for Paperweight is incredibly rewarding. A feeling of satisfaction when you know you have made a difference in someone else's life. A chance to get some perspective on your own life when you realise that what you thought was a bad day, pales into insignificance when you think of the challenges faced by your clients. The sheer variety of cases I've dealt with over the last two to three years has caused me to become more educated regarding issues that I hadn't thought about previously.

Although helpful, you don't need to have a legal, accounting, finance, or social work background -- however, life experience, a sensible head on your shoulders, an ability to navigate modern life and bureaucracy and an urge to help will be great assets as a Paperweight volunteer. I should also add that training and support are provided – you're not alone but part of a great team.

As summer progresses, please don't suffer from “bad-news fatigue” and let those in need of help disappear from our thoughts.

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Debt-negotiating, court-attending, benefits-advising, law-guiding, tribunal-accompanying, hand-holding, rights-advocating, landlord-challenging and people-empowering.

Your situation may involve any of these tasks, and more. Whatever your administrative, legal or financial problems, our 200 caseworkers, based in London, Manchester and Gateshead, have the expertise to help. And it's all free of charge.

To access our services or to make a donation to support our work, call 0330 174 4300 or visit paperweight.org.uk

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