

Jenny Tunbridge

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DM – Darren Mansell (Chair)

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JT: Morning everyone. I just wanted to just follow those presentations, touch on what the Trust can actually do to help you with your finances and also touch on a couple of hot topics that we've got going on at the moment.

The first thing I wanted to just touch on is, we are very much aware in the Trust that your needs are changing in relation to your homes. We are getting questions from many of you who are thinking of moving into a new property to meet your needs and also from others who wish to make adaptations to their properties and so we get questions around how that can be funded.

What we would do in the first instance is just recommend that you look into any grant funding that you can get from the local authorities which may help you with those and also look at funding from mortgage finance as well. We would always say look at the funding that you can get from outside of the Trust first. So do investigate mortgage finance. There may be mortgage deals that are more beneficial than Trust funding or equally grants that are just given to you and that you don't have to pay back to the Trust. But if you find that funding from those sources isn't available to you, the Trust can certainly help you.

So what we would do is look at your annual grant, look at what you are wanting the money for. We want to make sure, when we issue you with, what we call, an advance on a future year's grant funding that you can afford it. We would look at your annual grant, the maximum that's available to you is five times your annual grant and which will be repayable over a period of up to ten years. The effect that has is reducing your annual grants during the time when you are repaying the grant. Also because we are taking money out of our investment pot to be able to give you this money, there's a cost to the Trust. So there is an interest element that needs to be repaid which is currently 4% so you have to factor all of that in.

So if, for example, you were taking the maximum amount which is five times your annual grant over ten years, that would reduce your annual grant by half over the next ten years plus you would have interest on top of that. So we would want to make sure that by doing that we weren't putting you into financial difficulty. So we are starting to ask a few more questions. We will ask you about your income, maybe income you receive outside of the Trust. We will also look at your out-goings. We just want to just get a feel for, if we give you this money, in a couple of years' time you are not going to be struggling to repay it. It is very much working with you and what we would also do is look at the term because the term will affect the amount that you pay back so it may be that you need to go for a slightly longer term just to keep that affordable for you.

We do work with beneficiaries who have got grants but for them sometimes things change and we need to adjust the grant, so we can look at that as well. So it's just to make you aware that if you do approach us for finance it is very much working with

you rather than just writing a cheque and saying, "Here you go". We want to have that duty of care, just to make sure that we are not making you struggle in the future.

Moving onto health grants, we do have a number of beneficiaries who are not utilising their health grants, so I wanted to touch on what you can use the health grant for and touch on the feedback that we give to the UK Department of Health when we visit them. Because they are very interested to know what you are doing with the money. When we go to meet them, as Deborah said earlier, we go along with Beneficiary representatives and we feed back to them how the money is being spent and they are very keen to hear from the Beneficiaries more than us when we are there, how that money is being used and the benefit that it's bringing. So I wanted to touch on the main things that the money can be used for. It is a very wide remit that you can use the money for, it's really anything that will benefit your health and wellbeing. So just to go down the list.

Anything that would enhance your mobility. So if you are looking at vehicles, vehicle adaptations, wheelchairs, anything like that will count. Home adaptations, anything that you need done in your home can count that will help your home be more suitable for you. And think about communications and technology. If you need an i-pad or something that would help in the home maybe, technology, that also counts.

Medical treatment costs. This one is really any medical treatment that isn't covered by the NHS. So if you need treatment more quickly than you would get on the NHS or if you were looking at some therapies and maybe you'd want more therapy than you can get on the NHS. I know a number of Beneficiaries have massage. They use massage maybe more frequently than they could get on the NHS.

And also think about respite for carers. To go away with carers or just have a break away from the normal family life or just a break away that will give you some sort of break is something you can do and think about your personal assistants. If you need a bit more care in the home. If you need some extra hours care or you just need something to give you a bit more stimulation. Anything around that will count and social activities. Don't forget social activities. If Beneficiaries are at home on their own it's nice to get out and mix with other people so do think about that as well.

So it really is quite broad. So if you are not sure if something meets the criteria for the health grant do give us a call because we can talk you through that. We'd rather that you spent the money than it is sitting with us not being used. What we are doing is looking at the list of Beneficiaries who are not spending the money and trying to contact them just to make sure there's a reason for that, so if you get a call from us or we come and see you, that's something we'll be mentioning to you.

Something that's maybe not quite so exciting is VAT related. We do get a lot of calls about VAT so I just wanted to cover the reliefs that are available to you but do give us a call if there's anything you are unsure of. We have also prepared a fact sheet on VAT so if you are not sure if something you are purchasing meets the VAT relief criteria, do let us know. But there are strict rules particularly, if I just cover a few of them so you are aware and at least you can ask a question.

With car purchases, if you are buying a brand new car and you normally use a wheelchair, it's not occasional use, it has to be normal use, and your vehicle is permanently and substantially adapted and the vehicle is for your domestic use, you can qualify for VAT relief on that car. So you shouldn't be paying VAT. But what you need to do is make sure you've signed the declaration at the point when you buy the car. It is not something you cannot do afterwards. You need to do it at the point and

the decision is made by the person selling you the car. So you need to present the information to them, they will give you a declaration to sign; if they don't have the declaration, we do. We can send this to you. So if it's something they've not dealt with before just let us know and we can help you. We are happy to speak to the car dealers as well and just explain how it works but generally they are aware. But do let us know on that one.

Also you may be purchasing equipment for use. If you are purchasing equipment that is designed solely for use by a disabled person, again that should qualify for VAT relief. If you are having works to your home, this can be a little bit more tricky. With anything for your bathroom, if you are adapting or having a new bathroom and it is to meet your needs, it should, as a disabled person, qualify for VAT relief. Kitchens are different. Kitchens don't unless you are having a piece of equipment that is specifically to meet your disability needs. If you are buying something that's available just to the general public, it wouldn't qualify, even if you are buying a particular thing because it suits you. It has to be actually specifically adapted for disability needs.

But you just have to be mindful again, it is the same with the cars, you have to establish that at the point you agree to the works, you have to sign the VAT declaration at the beginning. It's very difficult to get the VAT back afterwards once you have already paid. So you need to be clear on that at the start, sign the form; again we've got the forms if your contractor hasn't dealt with that before. Or similarly if you are using a builder that's not familiar with VAT, we can talk them through that and just point them in the right direction. Do make sure. VAT is 20% so you don't want to pay it if you are entitled not to. It's something considerable.

Budgeting, this is something that we are becoming increasingly aware of. We are contacted by a number of Beneficiaries who, throughout the year, just struggle to meet their financial commitments until the next grant payment is made the following April. And sometimes it's because something unexpected has happened, maybe the boiler has broken, the car has broken down, they just didn't expect it. They need a bit of funding from the Trust just to tide them over but sometimes it's just because they haven't maybe planned as well as they could have done. So they have just literally run out of money. We can look at emergency grant funding for beneficiaries but then it has an impact on your funding the next year. If we give you a £1000 to pay for something then it's a £1000 less you are getting next year.

So we are trying to look at other ways making sure that your money can be managed in the best way. Some Beneficiaries like to have their money monthly and that's something we can do. Alternatively we can put a chunk of money aside so that when we send your money out in April you maybe have put a couple of thousand aside and then we'll send that later in the year. Equally that's something that works for others. Also think about direct debits. Rather than pay things in a lump it's may be that direct debits can help you stagger your finances a bit better. Keith and I are very happy through budgeting with you, setting up direct debits, just trying to avoid those emergency grants because again they attract interest so the time that you've got that outstanding there will be a little bit of interest accruing on that. So if it is something that if you can avoid, it is good to do that.

And just moving onto benefits. I'm sure you are all aware but I just want to reiterate your Trust grants are disregarded in benefit assessments in the year they are allocated. So if you need any confirmation of that, if you are having a review of your benefits, we can produce a letter which confirms that your Trust grants are completely outside the benefits calculations for that year. Also with tax. It shouldn't have any implications on tax. So let us know if you do need any help on that; also our

Health and Wellbeing team can advise on benefit assessments if you do have any issues with benefits do let us know.

And now, just following on from the presentations earlier; I just wanted to reiterate to you to make a will and wanted to touch on a case that we have had within the Trust. Unfortunately we lost a Beneficiary who had not left a will. This particular Beneficiary had taken the Trust insurance so we had the proceeds from his life insurance policy that came to the Trust. There was no instructions left on how this money should be distributed, no nomination form had been completed. So we had the money and then we had the difficulty where we had two different parts of the family both claiming that they were entitled to the money.

Now if this happens, it falls down to the Trustees to make a decision on where that money should go. They make best endeavours. They took legal advice, they really look at the case in great detail but ultimately this it is not the Beneficiary's decision. It's the Trustees' decision so although we made an equitable and fair decision as we possibly could have made, but how do we know that's what the beneficiary wanted to happen to this money? So we'd always say please do leave your instructions, particularly if you've got life insurance with the Trust and think about the grant funding that you get from the Trust, with your annual grant, if you have any annual grant that you haven't taken out of the Trust and you were to die, that goes to your Beneficiaries. The ownership of that money has passed to you so it would go to your estate. So really we need to know what to do with that money.

Health grant funding is slightly different in that if you die and you have got some Health Grant money still with us, then that would come back to the Trust because it would be deemed that there would no longer be any health needs so would come back to the Trust and go back to the pot for future distribution to surviving Beneficiaries. That's another reason we do say, "Spend your health grant." Use your health grant because if anything does happen to you the funds will come back to the Trust.

Now this is our hot topic. Just following on, particularly from all the media coverage on TalkTalk, I wanted to make you aware that we have had an incidence of attempted fraud affecting a Beneficiary. This particular Beneficiary lost his i-pad. The i-pad wasn't password protected. We don't know whether this was the source of the fraud but it's a contributing factor. The Trust received an email which looked to all intents and purposes to be from the Beneficiary. It asked, "How much money do I have left on my grant." Perfectly reasonable question. We've had that question before. We replied back saying, "You've got x number of thousands of pounds left." Then we get another email back. "Okay, I'd like to take this money oh and by the way I've changed my bank details." Again, not an unusual request. But, "And can I have this money by same day transfer?" So I thought this is slightly odd.

So we questioned it, called the beneficiary, and said, "we don't normally do same day bank transfers and why do you want it sent to Barclays and not Lloyds?" He said, "What are you talking about? No idea what you are talking about."

So fortunately, it was completely stopped. Nothing went out to the wrong account, the beneficiary didn't lose and the Trust didn't lose. But it is just something to be aware of. So what we are doing now to counteract this is, if we get something from you which says you've changed your bank details, we will always phone you. We will say, "Have you changed your bank details?" And if we are in any doubt we won't change. Money will go to the default account for you, so your main account on our system is the one we would generally use.

If we have any doubt at all we will always use that default account as we would not send any money to any account without doing those checks. But what we want to do as well is, as some Beneficiaries they do have a number of accounts held with us and we think that this is another potential for fraud as the risk is greater there, so we are looking to slim those down and just keep one account for you so that you've got more control so that when you do say, "Money to Barclays, money to Lloyds," for example, nothing can go wrong. If we've got just one account for you we'll know where to send it and we can monitor it a lot more carefully. Just think about that particularly if you do email us and ask to send money to a different place, don't be surprised if you get a phone call. And if we can't get hold of you, we would use your default account rather than take the risk that the money will go elsewhere.

And just moving onto other ways we can help. We are starting to produce factsheets. We've produced one on VAT. We've produced one on mortgage finance because some beneficiaries were finding it difficult to arrange mortgage finance. Some of the lenders were reluctant to take Trust grants as income so what we've done is produced factsheets. We are also working with the Council of Mortgage Lenders to try and make sure they understand how unique the Trust is. The Trust is not like a normal trust, a private trust. The Trust is guaranteeing your income for the whole of your life so we need to make sure lenders are aware of that.

We've also produced a factsheet on health grants. We are working on one for major grants/ emergency grants but if there are any others you would find useful, do let me know. We are happy to get those together and get them on the website.

That's it. So thank you very much.

DM: Has anyone get on any questions for Jenny at all? Hang on.

M1: Jenny. Two questions if I can remember them both. The first one was to do with VAT and cars. You said a wheelchair, normal wheelchair use, and permanent adaptations to the vehicle. I mean I have got permanent alterations to the vehicle but I don't use a wheelchair.

JT: No and it has to be all the three criteria that is set out by HMRC.

M1: That's fine, that's fine. Just clarification of it. It's not either or, it's both.

JT: No, it's all. Yes. All.

M1: Thank you. And the second, I suppose, is in relation to the health grant. If you have adaptations to things like bathrooms, kitchens or anything in the house. But what if you were to say really the best thing to do is to move house in order to get those working. Could the health grant go towards that?

JT: Yes. Absolutely. Anything that benefits your general health and wellbeing. Yes.

M1: Thank you.

DM: Another question?

F1: Going on VAT on cars. It's not only on purchases. When you go to the garage for a service, an MoT, you can get VAT relief on that.

JT: Yes, that's a really good point. A lot of people don't realise that.

F1: It saves a lot of money.

JT: Absolutely and the adaptations, if you have any adaptations as well. So that's worth bearing in mind because 20% on service costs is quite considerable.

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