



How incorrect advice led me to being fined over £150 for dental treatment

Mr Johnson is a pensioner with long term health conditions who was fined £153.90 for dental treatment that he received in March 2017. He had been in receipt of pension credit since his 60th birthday and when he reached the age of 65 his benefit changed from guaranteed pension credit to savings pension credit. Mr Johnson was unaware of this change until he received his fine, he tried to appeal the fine, but was unsuccessful. Fearing that the sum would increase, Mr Johnson paid the fine.

We use people's stories to highlight problems, and encourage the NHS to change and improve its services.
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Mr Johnson is a 65 year old pensioner, who has a number of long term health conditions which include COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), Poliomyelitis and lower back pain.

In April 2017 Mr Johnson received a penalty charge for dental treatment he received in March 2017, this amounted to £153.90 (£100 penalty and £53.90 for the dental treatment charge).

Mr Johnson has been in receipt of pension credit since his 60th birthday and when he reached the age of 65 years old this changed from guaranteed pension credit to savings pension credit. He was unaware of this change up until recently.

Mr Johnson has been to the dentist on many occasions in the past few years. He has had a wisdom tooth removed and routine check-ups; following all of these appointments he did not have to pay for any of the treatments. However, in March 2017 he attending his dental surgery to receive treatment for a broken tooth where he was asked by the receptionist to confirm that he was still receiving pension credit, this was the case so Mr Johnson confirmed and signed a form (via an iPad) that had already been filled in by the receptionist.

Whilst at the dental practice nobody advised Mr Johnson that he needed to pay anything, if at this stage he had known that he would have been charged for the treatment he would have made an informed decision to apply for a HC1 form. Which he has since completed and received a HC3 certificate which reduces his health care costs.

Mr Johnson was shocked and upset when he received the penalty charge letter, he tried to appeal the decision over the phone by contacting NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA), but he was unsuccessful. The NHSBA advised Mr Johnson that there were only two possibilities, he could either persuade the receptionist to admit it was her fault, or get a letter from the GP outlining that he was confused at the time of signing the declaration.

If Mr Johnson had been informed that he was not entitled to free NHS dental treatment he would have happily paid the full treatment amount, but he does not believe that it is fair to receive a penalty charge of £153.90 for something that he was unaware of.

Mr Johnson believes that he has been fined unfairly and that he should not have to pay a penalty charge of £153.90 for something he was unaware of.

Mr Johnson paid the fine in fear that the sum would increase and he would not be able to pay the fee. As a pensioner this amount is a lot and Mr Johnson would like a refund.

This story is one of many that Healthwatch Kirklees has heard over the last two years. Often the people we speak to are those who have multiple health conditions in need of regular prescriptions, living on low incomes and least able to afford to pay the penalty fines.

We will be sharing the stories we have heard with NHS England and NHS Business Services Authority.



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