

Waiting

by Lesley Dawson

Where was he? He was usually in every day for breakfast and then went off to his pitch outside the Coop on Terminus Road. What had happened? We began to think he might have been moved on by the police or had even spent a few nights as a guest at the local nick.

Bob was a tough old bird and had been a soldier in his youth, serving in the Falklands. This had gained him a service pension and a slight limp. Leaving the service was followed by unemployment and eventually homelessness. After all what job did yomping across South Georgia fit you for? And how could you cope with not having someone else to tell you what to do and when and how to do it? He now rented a room in a shared house down the road.

Then, two weeks later, he limped in, looking a bit worse for wear. What had happened? The bloodshot eye could have been caused by a fall or “walking into a door”. The real reason was he had been attacked by a gang of youths and taken by ambulance to the Conquest Hospital where he was admitted to the Neuro Ward with bleeding on the brain.

A few days later, he came back, accompanied by his son. This tall, tanned man was a forestry manager in North Yorkshire and had only just heard what had happened to his dad. Driving through the night, he looked tired and frustrated by his father’s obvious need for help, yet unwillingness to ask for it. The son grinned as he explained, “I like to make use of what I know, but in this situation, I am totally out of my depth, so we need your help.”

Sitting down with him, we discussed Bob’s situation. He was already in receipt of Pension Credit, having reached retirement age a few months before. If these injuries were permanent, they would add to his disability. Was he eligible for an Attendance Allowance? His son was concerned that his dad couldn’t manage on his own, now being very much more unsteady on his feet and often quite confused. He explained that he could only stay for the next month but then must go back to his work in Settle.

Sitting down in the Mission with mugs of tea and plates of sausage casserole and mash they waited as Maria tried to get in touch with Adult Social Care. Knowing that these things invariably took a lot of time, she prepared them for a long wait. This long wait was repeated each day over the next three days until finally they were able to speak to someone.

A smiling pair pushed the door open and sat down at the admin desk and reported good news. Someone from Adult Social Care had phoned and they were coming to do a home assessment. All would now be well, wouldn't it?

Well, it would depend on what they found and how long the queue was for attention, but at least someone was coming, and they had promised him a place in a local Day Care Centre.