Member Case Study: Mrs H

Mrs H is just over 60 years old. On 4th February, the Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO) met her and helped her to complete her UC claim online as she had received her final wage slip. Mrs H advised that as she had a bit of money put away, she did not want to apply for an advance payment. The following day, Mrs H was due to attend her JobCentre interview to confirm her claim details, provide proof of rent and agree her claimant commitments.

On 11th February, the TSO contacted Mrs H to see what progress had been made with her claim. She said the JobCentre had cancelled the interview for the 5th February and rearranged for 9th February at 11.30am. Mrs H had been worried because the work coach mentioned sanctioning for being late as her appointment was for 10.30am despite definitely being told the interview was at 11.30am. JobCentre staff couldn’t advise when she would receive her UC payment.

On the 4th March, the TSO contacted DWP to ask when Mrs H would receive her first payment as she still had not been informed. DWP advised that the payment date would be 17th March as they had applied seven waiting days. The TSO challenged this as Mrs H had been in receipt of Housing Benefit within one month of applying for UC. They accepted that they could see something regarding HB on the system but they would still have to apply the seven waiting days until the council provided evidence. It was not clear why this had not been sought whilst the claim was being processed. The TSO contacted the council who advised that they had sent the information to DWP on 12th February. TSO relayed this information to DWP staff who said they would get back to the tenant. This didn’t happen. When the TSO contacted Mrs H again on 10th March, she advised she still hadn’t been paid.

On 18th March, the tenant showed TSO a DWP letter stating that UC payment would be on 10th March but she had still not received anything. TSO contacted DWP who stated the letter should have said 17th March (although still no payment had been received). DWP advised that the tenant must apply for a mandatory reconsideration regarding the seven-day waiting period and thought payment should be received that day. Mrs H had exhausted her savings, had just £3 in her bank account and would have to borrow from her daughter for food and travel costs to get to her JobCentre interview or be sanctioned. Mrs H accepted a food voucher at this time.

Mrs H phoned later that day to say DWP had text her to say they were going to put £312 into her account. This amount suggested that they had not included her housing costs and TSO spoke with DWP to sort out the housing costs and again request a review of the 7-day waiting period. He was advised by DWP to complete a mandatory reconsideration request. This was sent to DWP on 18th March, requesting the payment date be changed from 17th to 10th. Mrs H received her payment into her bank account, later on 18th March – she had waited over 6 weeks for her first payment.

On the 31st March, TSO contacted DWP who advised they had received the mandatory reconsideration letter but it had not shown up on the system as a task therefore it hadn’t been sent to a decision maker. In addition, they were having problems with their systems but asked the TSO to provide the information again and they would complete a mandatory reconsideration form and send it to a decision maker.

TSO also informed DWP that Mrs H’s rent was reducing by 1% from 4th April 2016. DWP advised that they could not take the information from him or Mrs H over the phone and could only accept this in writing with proof or arrange an ‘evidence interview’ at the JobCentre. Tenant was due to attend JobCentre on 4th April, so the evidence interview was arranged for same day. TSO provided Mrs H with a rent reduction letter. TSO contacted Mrs H again on 8th April. She had not received result of the mandatory reconsideration. However, she subsequently received a text later that day stating she will be paid on 10th April which suggests that they have reconsidered the decision, removed her seven days waiting period and changed the payment date from the 17th of each month to the 10th of each month.