

APPENDIX 1 – UNIVERSAL CREDIT CASE STUDIES

The latest DWP figures show there are 5,564 households in receipt of Universal Credit in Brighton & Hove. Council and community and advice services within the city are positioned to support complex and vulnerable clients. Below are a selection of case studies these services have been involved in supporting.

Case study 1 – Changes to residency conditions under Universal Credit

An EU national parent of two children aged three (with a high level of special needs) and four contacted Family Information Service (FIS). The parent had been working for her husband whom she had left because of domestic violence.

Her claim was turned down, because she was deemed to have voluntarily given up her job and had lost the right to benefits under habitual residency rules. All of her benefits were stopped, including Housing Benefit. Her main concern was being made homeless. When she contacted FIS she was appealing this decision in the hope of having her “worker status” re-instated.

FIS referred the parent to a foodbank and advised her about the Homeless Intervention Trailblazer. The parent was signed up to the FIS-managed Providing Access to Childcare and Employment (PACE) project where she was given employment advice and support. The parent subsequently was successful in applying for a full-time job with a local company and the council is continuing to work with her to address her childcare requirements..

Case study 2 – Changes to residency conditions under Universal Credit

This parent was referred to FIS by the Housing Options Team as she was suffering financial hardship. She was moved to emergency accommodation from outside of Brighton & Hove due to domestic violence. This triggered a change in circumstances requiring her to make a claim for Universal Credit. She had been living in UK for 8 years. Because she had come to the UK to study and had split up with her partner, she lost “worker status” when the relationship broke down.

She was working part-time and the Jobcentre Plus advised her that she needed to work a minimum of 25 hours per week. Under legacy benefits, she would only have needed to work 16 hours per week to get Working Tax Credits. Because the parent was not in receipt of eligible benefits, she was not entitled to free childcare for her two year old.

FIS made a foodbank referral and spoke to the Welfare Rights team who advised to make a referral to Voices in Exile as her issues were linked to her “right to reside”

Case study 3 – Barriers when applying for Universal Credit

This was a referral from a Health Visitor to council’s Children’s Services Front Door for Families, which was then allocated to FIS. The client was a single parent, who was on a waiting list for an operation, she was in constant pain and had very limited mobility. Her ESA benefit stopped 18th January 2018 following a Work Capability Assessment which stated that client ‘did not have a limited capability to work’. She was advised to claim Universal Credit.

The client had been unable to make a UC claim because of the barriers she faced:

- No internet at home
- No smart phone
- No IT skills
- No email address
- Unable to get out and about to get internet access
- Unable to make telephone calls, as no credit on mobile phone, or any money to buy top ups
- No landline phone available

FIS made enquiries to see if anyone from the Jobcentre Plus would do a home visit to help her claim UC, but this was refused. FIS were advised that client had managed to get a lift to the Jobcentre with a friend and received support whilst there to make an online claim. The client was advised that she would need to have her documents verified before the claim would be accepted.

After numerous telephone conversations, FIS were able to arrange a home visit to get her documents verified, but the first date available was 1st March 2018.

FIS applied to the Local Discretionary Social Fund, and the client received a £40.00 grocery voucher.

Advance universal credit payment was received a month after the referral was received. The first UC payment was due over two months after the referral.

The client was therefore without any income from when her ESA stopped on 18th January until she received her Universal Credit advance on 5th April.