

Advice Worker Weekly Report on in centre appointments, 26th June 2020

Clients seen: 12

Housing Referrals: 7

Synopsis of Activity

- Advice given on client tax return
- Tenancy sustainment work for two clients
- Hostel referrals
- Referrals to private rented accommodation
- Advice given on welfare benefits for 3 clients
- Rent reduction requested and secured for 1 client
- Universal credit claim completed for 1 client
- Applications to Southwark Emergency Support Scheme done for 2 clients
- Suitability request for temporary accommodation submitted for 1 client
- Advice by phone and email given to colleagues working in other services
- Referral to outreach team for 1 client
- Follow up activities for securing ID for 1 client

Issues

Difficulties speaking with clients with limited English or presenting with mental health problems over conference call; Difficult to predict timescales of housing providers due to current situation; No shelters open so outreach only option – difficult to be found bedded down for clients who can occasionally stay with friends or who walk around all night and sleep in the day due to feeling unsafe sleeping at night; Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rise with no benefit cap rise means that Private Rented Sector accommodation for people on Universal Credit which sets rent at LHA levels means more clients affected by benefit cap when accessing this accommodation.

Case study

Linda* has recently moved into private rented accommodation after being homeless and staying in a night shelter. She also has a tenancy sustainment worker as she is relatively new to the UK and not familiar with the welfare and housing systems, and also because she is older and has a tendency to be forgetful. Linda was worried because requests we have put in for her rent to be paid directly to the landlord have not been confirmed by Universal Credit, and she has been locked out of her Universal Credit account as she lost her security number. She has also run out of money this month and won't be paid again for another two weeks. I called Universal Credit and was able to confirm that her rent will be paid directly to her landlord next month. I also requested that they arrange to send out a new security number to her. I also checked the details of her payments and confirmed that she was being subject to the benefit cap due to how high her rent was, which is why she was short of money. I was able to negotiate with the lettings agency for a lower rent where she would have enough to live on. I co-ordinated with her tenancy sustainment worker and agreed that she would help Linda update her Universal Credit account once the new contract had been provided. I arranged another appointment with Linda to apply for discretionary housing payment to make up the shortfall from this month.

*Not her real name