

complaint

Mrs H complains that Provident Personal Credit Limited has changed the way it arranges collections. As a result it has unfairly recorded negative details on her credit file.

background

Mrs H had a loan with Provident. She said she had an agreed payment collection time and date. And she never missed a payment. But Provident changed its business model and the money hasn't been collected in the normal way. Its staff tried to arrange collections when she wasn't available. So Provident has recorded late payment markers on her credit file.

Mrs H said she's found it very upsetting. She doesn't want to pay by any other method. She just wants Provident to keep to the original collection times. So she wants the balance writing off and her credit file correcting.

Provident was sorry its replacement representative hadn't always been able to collect her repayments. And it apologised if Mrs H hadn't received a high level of service. Arranging collections shouldn't be a problem. But it can't always accommodate precise requirements. Provident said there were alternative repayment methods available – such as the automated card payment line – which might help Mrs H. Provident said when its representative called to collect a payment Mrs H said there was no point in him calling. She was dealing with the company directly now.

Our investigator looked into the matter but she didn't think Provident had treated Mrs H unfairly. She could see some payments were made on different days. And there were missed payments before Provident changed the agent. So she didn't think the repayment issues were directly because of Provident's reorganisation.

Provident was obliged to report accurate information to credit agencies. And she didn't think it had done anything wrong reporting the missed payments. So it wouldn't be fair to ask Provident to write off the loan.

Mrs H didn't agree. She'd had a great relationship with her previous agent. And if she'd missed any payments they were caught up the next week and the agent was notified.

my findings

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Mrs H says she had a specific time and date when Provident visited to collect her repayment. But when the agent changed there were problems with the collections. And the area manager wasn't able to sort things out.

The loan agreement doesn't specify an exact collection time or date. And the payment history suggests there was some variation when the repayments were collected. And there were some missed or late payments before the agent changed.

I appreciate Mrs H has a busy schedule, complicated by family health issues. And she thinks she was managing the loan before Provident changed its operations. But it's not our role to tell Provident how to run its business. Our role is to see if Provident has made any mistakes.

And then put the customer back in the position they'd have been in if the mistake hadn't happened.

If Mrs H wasn't in when the agent visited, a calling card was left reminding her of the need to make a payment. And it suggested automated payments could also be made. I realise automated payments don't necessarily replace the need for collection visits. But it might help remove the worry about payment dates being missed and Mrs H's credit file being affected.

Provident has an obligation to report late payments to credit agencies. It needs to accurately reflect how the account is being managed. But it has confirmed it hasn't reported a default against Mrs H's account.

By accepting the loan Mrs H agreed to make repayments. And although Provident can't always collect the money when Mrs H is available, it has offered alternative methods for the collections to be taken. So it might be easier for Mrs H, given her circumstances, to arrange a direct bank payment rather than be forced to wait in for personal visits.

I understand how frustrating this has been for Mrs H. She says Provident hasn't always turned up for home visits when they were arranged. And she's tried to sort things out with Provident on many occasions. But Provident has offered a number of options which Mrs H can consider to make sure her payments are collected. And while I understand the family pressures Mrs H is under, I do think Provident has tried to be flexible in trying to help her make her repayments.

Based on what I've seen, I can't really say Provident has acted unfairly or unreasonably. So I won't be asking it to do anything more.

my final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs H to accept or reject my decision before 1 March 2018.

Andrew Mason
ombudsman