

Ombudsman's Determination

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| Applicant | Mr H |
| Scheme | NEST Pension Plan (the Plan) |
| Respondent | Staylists Ltd (the Employer) |

Outcome

1. Mr H's complaint is upheld and, to put matters right, the Employer shall pay the missing contributions in respect of his pension and make good any shortfall in units. In addition, the Employer shall pay Mr H £1,000 for the serious distress and inconvenience it has caused him.

Complaint summary

2. Mr H has complained that the Employer, despite deducting contributions from his pay, has failed to pay them into the Plan.
3. Mr H has said that the missing contributions amounted to £5,659.11.

Background information, including submissions from the parties

4. On 8 October 2019, the Employer paid its last pension contribution into the Plan.
5. In November 2021, Mr H was made redundant by the Employer.
6. On 9 November 2021, Mr H contacted the Employer about the unpaid contributions. He said that his NEST account was showing that no pension contributions had been paid since October 2019.
7. On 11 November 2021, the Employer acknowledged the outstanding pension contributions and said this would be dealt with.
8. On 20 November 2021, Mr H chased the Employer regarding the outstanding pension contributions.
9. On 19 March 2022, Mr H submitted an application to The Pensions Ombudsman (**TPO**).

10. Mr H provided copies of the payslips that he held for the period from September 2019 to November 2021, which detailed the pension contributions deducted from his pay and the corresponding employer contributions. These deductions amounted to £5,659.11. A breakdown of the deductions has been included in the Appendix.
11. On 8 September 2022, TPO wrote to the Employer to ask for more information in response to Mr H's complaint. This request was repeated on 22 September 2022. Neither of these requests received a response.

Caseworker's Opinion

12. Mr H's complaint was considered by one of our Caseworkers who concluded that further action was required by the Employer as it had failed to remit the contributions that were due to the Plan. The Caseworker's findings are summarised below:-
 - The Caseworker stated that TPO's normal approach, in cases such as these, was to seek agreement from all parties on the facts of the complaint, including the dates and amounts of contributions involved. He said that, as the Employer had not responded to any of TPO's communications, he had to base his Opinion solely on the information provided by Mr H.
 - The Caseworker said that he had no reason to doubt the information provided by Mr H. So, in the Caseworker's Opinion, on the balance of probabilities, contributions had been deducted from Mr H's salary, that had not been paid into the Plan. In addition, the Employer had not paid any of the employer contributions that were due over the same period. As a result of its maladministration, Mr H was not in the financial position he ought to be in.
 - In the Caseworker's view, Mr H had suffered serious distress and inconvenience due to the Employer's maladministration. The Caseworker was of the opinion that an award of £1,000 for non-financial injustice was appropriate in the circumstances.
13. The Employer did not respond to the Caseworker's Opinion and the complaint was passed to me to consider. I agree with the Caseworker's Opinion.

Ombudsman's decision

14. Mr H has complained that the Employer has not paid all the contributions due to his Plan account.
15. I find that employee contributions were deducted but held back by the Employer and not paid into the Plan. The Employer failed to rectify this and did not engage with either my Office or Mr H. It has also failed to respond to the Caseworker's Opinion.

16. The Employer's failure to pay employee and employer contributions into the Plan amounts to unjust enrichment and has caused Mr H to suffer a financial loss. The Employer shall take remedial action to put this right.
17. Mr H is entitled to a distress and inconvenience award in respect of the serious ongoing non-financial injustice which he has suffered. This was exacerbated by its failure to respond during my Office's investigation into Mr H's complaint.

Directions

18. To put matters right, the Employer shall, within 28 days of the date of this Determination:
 - (i) pay Mr H £1,000 for the serious distress and inconvenience he has experienced;
 - (ii) produce a schedule (**the Schedule**) showing the employee contributions deducted from Mr H's pay in respect of the period of his employment. The Schedule shall also include the corresponding employer contributions that were due to the Plan; and
 - (iii) forward the Schedule to Mr H.
19. The Employer shall, within 14 days of receiving a request by Mr H, provide him with any reasonable additional information, in order for him to be able to check the details in the Schedule.
20. Within 14 days of receiving confirmation from Mr H that he agrees with the information on the Schedule, the Employer shall:
 - (i) pay the missing contributions to the Plan;
 - (ii) establish with the Plan whether the late payment of contributions has meant that fewer units were purchased in Mr H's Plan account than he would have otherwise secured, had the contributions been paid on time; and
 - (iii) pay any reasonable administration fee should the Plan administrator charge a fee for carrying out the above calculation.
21. Within 14 days of receiving confirmation from NEST of any shortfall in Mr H's units, pay the cost of purchasing any additional units required to make up the shortfall.

Anthony Arter

Pensions Ombudsman
8 December 2022

Appendix

| Date | Employee contributions | Employer contributions |
|------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 26/09/2019 | £72.96 (Paid) | £91.07 (Paid) |
| 26/10/2019 | £72.86 | £91.07 |
| 29/11/2019 | £72.86 | £91.07 |
| 30/12/2019 | £72.86 | £91.07 |
| 26/01/2020 | £72.86 | £91.07 |
| 28/02/2020 | £72.86 | £91.07 |
| 30/03/2020 | £72.86 | £91.07 |
| 24/04/2020 | £79.20 | £99.00 |
| 29/05/2020 | £79.20 | £99.00 |
| 26/06/2020 | £79.20 | £99.00 |
| 31/07/2020 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 27/08/2020 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 25/09/2020 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 30/10/2020 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 27/11/2020 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 24/12/2020 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 31/01/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 26/02/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 26/03/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 30/04/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 28/05/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 26/06/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 26/07/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 26/08/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 29/09/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |

CAS-85781-M8K2

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| 26/0/2021 | £112.54 | £140.67 |
| 19/11/2021 | £39.81 | £49.76 |
| Unpaid Contributions | £2,515.21 | £3,143.90 |
| Total Unpaid Contributions: £5,659.11 | | |