

The complaint

Mr B has complained about The Prudential Assurance Company Limited. He's unhappy that it's been unable to trace a pension he held with a former employer.

What happened

Mr B understands that he may have a pension with a former employer dating from his employment in the 1980's. Due to house moves and other factors, he doesn't have any documentary evidence of his interest in the pension. He contacted the Pension Tracing Service which suggested the pension may be held by Prudential.

Mr B contacted Prudential but it said it was unable to trace any details for him, or for the employer's policy on its systems. Mr B complained about Prudential's handling of his enquiry and it accepted that the service it provided could have been better. It offered him £50 for any inconvenience caused but restated that it couldn't locate the policy and asked for any other documentation Mr B could provide.

Mr B referred his complaint to this service. An investigator considered the complaint but she didn't think it should be upheld. She explained that this service didn't hold historic pension information and couldn't make any additional checks. Prudential appeared to have made the correct searches and although this had not produced any results, it wasn't acting unfairly. The investigator felt that the offer it had made for the service failings was fair.

Mr B didn't agree and asked for a decision from an ombudsman.

What I've decided – and why

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

I agree with the investigator and with her reasoning. I don't uphold this complaint.

Essentially, I think Prudential has made the searches that it could reasonably be expected to make. Unfortunately that has not identified Mr B's pension or his former employer's pension scheme.

The negative search result isn't something that this service can independently check or verify. We don't hold pension records, that's the role of the DWP or the Pension Tracing Service. I note that the Pension Tracing Service appears only to have identified Prudential on its second search, so that in itself may raise a question mark on how reliable the information is. And even if the pension scheme could be identified, that may not establish that Mr B was a member of it.

I'm sorry that there is very little I can add to what the investigator has already said. But for the reasons given, I don't uphold this complaint as I think Prudential's offer is fair.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint about The Prudential Assurance Company Limited. I think its offer of £50 is fair and it should pay this sum to Mr B if it hasn't already done so.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 29 June 2020.

Keith Taylor
Ombudsman