

The complaint

Mr M complains that ReAssure Limited (ReAssure) provided incorrect valuation statements for his pension. This led to concern about his pension.

What happened

Mr M has a pension policy with ReAssure.

Mr M said that the following had occurred:

- The statement he received on 17 September 2018 gave the value of his pension as £23,224.24. He said that this was £74,167.64 lower than the previous statement he'd received on 4 April 2017.
- Mr M said he'd requested a correction of this statement by phone, but that this hadn't happened.
- The statement he received on 27 February 2019 gave the value of his pension as £23,007.38.
- Mr M said he'd requested a correction of this statement by phone. He said that he received a correction letter dated 1 April 2019 which gave the pension value as £109,028.20.
- Mr M said he received a statement dated 28 September 2019 which gave the pension value as £121,661.73.

I've not been sent copies of the statements referenced above. But I have seen copies of the statements covered in the next section.

ReAssure sent Mr M an annual pension statement dated 25 February 2020 which gave the value of his pension as at 21 February 2020 as £25,578.78. He said this was almost £100,000 lower than the value shown on the September 2019 statement.

Mr M called ReAssure on 9 March 2020 about his concern that his pension had fallen in value. ReAssure confirmed the same day that the February 2020 annual statement was wrong. They said they'd send a corrected statement. The call note recorded that Mr M was: *"a little disgruntled as this is the second time he has been quoted incorrect values"*. It also noted that a warning flag would be added to stop the problem from happening again.

ReAssure sent Mr M a new statement dated 10 March 2020. This showed that the value of his pension on 9 March 2020 was £121,156.53.

ReAssure sent a further statement to Mr M dated 4 August 2020. This showed that the value was £23,936.72 on 28 July 2020. Mr M requested a corrected statement by phone.

ReAssure issued a further statement to Mr M dated 18 September 2020. This stated that as at 15 September 2020 the pension fund value was £45,545.17 and the transfer value was

£116,224.94. The letter apologised for any previous incorrect information and provided a brief explanation about why the values given were different.

Mr M called ReAssure on 24 September 2020. He said the 18 September 2020 letter hadn't mentioned the value of his protected rights. ReAssure's call note recorded that this was: "*apparently a system error, the flag doesn't work ref manual statements*". The notes also stated that Mr M was: "*very confused and fed up*" and that they needed to provide Mr M with clear information on how the protected rights were calculated.

ReAssure sent a further letter dated 28 September 2020. This included a table showing the price, units and value for the same managed fund, in three separate rows. The letter stated that both the fund value and the transfer value were £23,768.09 of which £9,305.89 was protected rights.

Mr M called ReAssure to query this letter on 2 October 2020. He said he felt that the 28 September 2020 letter had been intended to correct the letter sent on 18 September 2020, which itself had tried to correct the information provided in the 4 August 2020 statement. Mr M said he felt as if he'd been trying to get a correct valuation since 10 March 2020. The call note recorded that Mr M was very unhappy. And noted that the valuation sent on the 28 September 2020 was: "*completely wrong*".

ReAssure sent a corrected statement to Mr M on 5 October 2020, with values as at 4 October 2020. The statement included a table showing the price, units and value for two different funds, with each fund shown in three separate rows of the table. This stated that the pension fund value was £45,237.01 and the transfer value was £115,963.33.

The 5 October 2020 letter also included the pension fund value and transfer value as at 10 March 2020. It said these were £43,311.92 and £119,972.85 respectively.

Mr M complained to ReAssure on 10 October 2020. He said he'd received contradictory information. He said that the 5 October 2020 letter gave a different value for the fund as at 10 March 2020 from the letter dated 10 March 2020. He wanted to know which valuation had been correct.

Mr M felt that the statements he'd been sent hadn't been consistent. And that he'd repeatedly been sent valuations which were too low. He felt he'd had to try on a number of occasions to get the correct values. He also queried the value of his protected rights and said that he had no way of confirming the value of this himself. Mr M said that he was increasingly concerned, given how close he was to his retirement age, that the figures being quoted were incorrect.

ReAssure issued their final response to the complaint on 9 November 2020. They acknowledged that they'd provided Mr M with incorrect information which had caused him some concerns. They apologised for providing incorrect information. And said that Mr M had now received the correct information, "*including the Protected Rights element*". ReAssure didn't offer any compensation for their errors or the distress and inconvenience they'd caused Mr M.

Unhappy with the response, Mr M brought his complaint to this service. He said that ReAssure hadn't called him when they said they would. And that although the final response letter had stated that he'd been provided with the correct information, he hadn't been given everything he'd requested.

Our investigator felt that the complaint should be upheld. He felt that ReAssure had caused Mr M distress and inconvenience. And that they should pay him £300 compensation. He also

felt that ReAssure should provide Mr M with a clear and accurate updated statement which included a breakdown of his protected rights, as he'd requested.

ReAssure didn't agree with our investigator. They felt that the letter they'd issued on 5 October 2020 had confirmed why the values he'd been provided with previously were incorrect. They acknowledged that the incorrect values they'd given him may've caused Mr M upset, but said he'd been free to contact them at any point about his concerns. They apologised for sending conflicting information. But felt that they hadn't caused him to suffer any financial loss. And felt that no compensation should be paid.

As agreement couldn't be reached, the complaint has come to me for a review.

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.

Having done so, I'm going to uphold it. I agree with our investigator that ReAssure should provide Mr M with compensation for the distress and inconvenience they've caused him. I'll explain the reasons for my decision.

ReAssure's position is that their apology for the incorrect statements is enough to resolve the complaint. They feel that as the incorrect statements didn't cause Mr M a financial loss, they shouldn't be required to compensate him.

I don't agree with ReAssure that there should be no compensation just because they've not caused Mr M a financial loss.

From what I've seen, the following points that Mr M has raised with ReAssure have either yet to be resolved, or have yet to be fairly considered:

- The failure to address Mr M's query about what he felt was contradictory information about 10 March 2020 values in the 5 October 2020 correction letter.
- The failure to provide Mr M with clear and accurate details about his protected rights.
- the upset caused when ReAssure repeatedly provided Mr M with incorrect – and significantly lower – valuations.

I went on to consider each of these points.

Failure to address all of Mr M's complaint points

As I noted above, ReAssure failed to address Mr M's query about what he felt was contradictory information in the 5 October 2020 letter. I'm of the view that it would've been difficult for Mr M to believe that the figures quoted were correct, given how many times they'd been wrong. Therefore I consider that ReAssure should've responded to this query as quickly as possible in order to give Mr M confidence about the service they were providing him. ReAssure also failed to respond to Mr M's request for clear and accurate details about his protected rights.

ReAssure sent Mr M a statement dated 10 March 2020. This showed that the current value of his pension was £121,156.53 as at 9 March 2020. ReAssure also included a value as at 10 March 2020 in their 5 October 2020 correction letter. This stated that the transfer value had been £119,972.85 on 10 March 2020. Mr M queried the difference in values in his

complaint email of 10 October 2020. But I've seen no reply to this point from ReAssure.

From what I've seen, Mr M understood that the two valuations referred to in the previous paragraph were both as at 10 March 2020, but actually one was as at 9 March 2020. Therefore I suspect that there was in fact no contradiction here. The values were simply for different dates. However, as I stated earlier, I consider that ReAssure should've replied as quickly as possible to Mr M to reassure him about this point.

Mr M also requested details about the protected rights element of his pension on more than one occasion. But the only information I've seen ReAssure provide on this point was within their 28 September 2020 letter. This said that both the fund value and the transfer value were £23,768.09 of which £9,305.89 was protected rights. Mr M was subsequently told by ReAssure that this letter was: "*completely wrong*".

ReAssure's final response letter stated that Mr M had now received corrected information which included the protected rights element. But that wasn't correct. The updated valuation information ReAssure had sent to Mr M didn't include any information on his protected rights.

Our investigator asked ReAssure to provide an updated valuation of Mr M's protected rights. They did this, stating that as at 17 June 2021 the value was £54,333.76. But I don't consider that Mr M has been provided with a full response to his original query about his protected rights. As such, I consider that ReAssure should provide Mr M with a clear and accurate pension statement which includes a breakdown of his protected rights, in line with his request.

I next considered the impact on Mr M of ReAssure's errors.

Incorrect information and its impact on Mr M

The evidence shows that Mr M was provided with incorrect valuations on 25 February 2020, 4 August 2020 and 28 September 2020. Mr M has also said that ReAssure made additional errors before these dates. On each of these occasions the valuations stated a significantly lower value for Mr M's pension.

Mr M is relatively close to reaching his retirement age. So it's clearly very important for him to have correct values for his pension. From what I've seen, ReAssure have failed to give Mr M any comfort that the values they've given him were correct. I would expect this to be very concerning for any customer, and even more so for one approaching his retirement age.

Mr M has told this service that the incorrect values were a cause for concern. I've also seen evidence that he also expressed his concerns about the incorrect valuations to ReAssure.

ReAssure consider that as their errors didn't cause Mr M a financial loss, there's no need for any compensation.

This service can only consider making an award for distress or inconvenience if a complaint has been determined in favour of the complainant and if the business's mistake has resulted in adverse consequences for the complainant.

While ReAssure have acknowledged their mistakes, I consider that they didn't respond to their mistakes as well as they could have. From what I've seen, they didn't put things right quickly. I say this because it's evident that Mr M had to make repeated attempts to get incorrect statements corrected.

ReAssure have acknowledged that they made errors in the statements they sent to Mr M.

And have apologised for their errors. But as ReAssure didn't fully address all of Mr M's complaint points, I don't consider that they've fairly concluded his complaint.

From what I've seen, Mr M has been unfairly impacted by ReAssure's errors. I consider that ReAssure's errors caused Mr M more than the levels of frustration and annoyance he might reasonably expect from day-to-day life. I'm satisfied that the impact has been more than just minimal, and therefore I don't agree that an apology is enough to remedy the errors. Therefore I consider that compensation of £300 for the distress and inconvenience caused would be fair and reasonable under the circumstances of this complaint.

I'm also not satisfied that the complaint has been fully dealt with as Mr M's query about his protected rights has yet to be fully addressed.

For the reasons I've given above, I uphold the complaint.

Putting things right

ReAssure Limited must:

- Provide Mr M with a clear and accurate pension statement which includes a breakdown of his protected rights.
- Pay Mr M £300 for the distress and inconvenience they've caused him.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, I uphold this complaint. I require ReAssure Limited to take the actions detailed in the "Putting things right" section above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 26 July 2022.

Jo Occleshaw
Ombudsman