

The complaint

Ms B says Nationwide Building Society failed to process her application to transfer in an ISA and she has lost interest as a result.

What happened

Ms B says she and her husband gave completed ISA transfer forms to a Nationwide branch on 8 April 2021. She recalls they asked adviser to check the forms; there was a query on hers that the adviser went off to check and returned confirming all was okay. Ms B's husband's transfer went ahead but hers did not. Once he had received his certificate (around two months after application) she visited the branch every three to four weeks to check up on her transfer. She says she was told there was a delay due to applications not being transferred to head office, but that interest would be backdated. After being told this on several occasions, with no progress being made on the transfer, she complained to the business in September 2021.

Nationwide said it had no record of Ms B's application, and that if it had been caught up in the delay she would have received a reference number. As she hadn't, it concluded she hadn't applied to transfer in her ISA.

Our investigator didn't uphold Ms B's complaint. He said this was a challenging case but based on the available evidence he couldn't say Nationwide had made an error. He felt that as Nationwide had assigned a reference number to all delayed applications and Ms B did not have one it was hard to conclude Ms B had applied. In addition, Nationwide's system showed no record of any application to transfer in being logged in Ms B's name.

Unhappy with this assessment Ms B asked for an ombudsman's review, so the complaint was passed to me. I reached a different conclusion to the investigator and so I issued a provisional decision. An extract follows and forms part of this final decision. I asked both parties to send in any comments or new evidence by 25 July 2022.

Extract from my provisional decision

As the investigator said this is a difficult complaint to investigate and we lack conclusive evidence. Ms B's testimony about their branch visit to submit the two applications is credible, but it does not allow me to know with any certainty what happened to her application. The society has explained all applicants caught up in the delay were allocated a reference number and Ms B did not receive one. It has also shown how ISA transfer requests are logged on its system - and the most recent request in her name is from 10 August 2020. In the circumstances I can't fairly conclude with certainty that there was a failing on Nationwide's part at this stage.

However, I think that it failed with the level of customer service it provided when Ms B visited the branch to ask for an update. At that stage it ought to have asked for the reference number (that all delayed applications had received) and when it then became apparent that she did not have one, it would have alerted both parties to the missing application much sooner – avoiding the inconvenience of repeated branch visits for Ms B, as well the stress of

not knowing what was happening to her savings.

To recognise the avoidable inconvenience Ms B suffered I will be instructing Nationwide to pay her £50 compensation.

Ms B responded, accepting my provisional decision. Nationwide responded saying it agreed to pay the £50 compensation.

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.

As neither party sent in any new evidence or information I have no reason to change the findings or outcome set out above. So whilst I have not found Nationwide should be held liable for a loss of interest, it must compensate Ms B for not doing all it could to minimise the inconvenience she experienced.

Putting things right

Nationwide should pay Ms B £50 compensation for the inconvenience she suffered.

My final decision

I am upholding Ms B's complaint in part. Nationwide Building Society must now put things right as set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms B to accept or reject my decision before 23 August 2022.

Rebecca Connelley
Ombudsman