

The complaint

Mrs C complains about administrative errors made by Succession Wealth Management Ltd (SWM).

What happened

Mrs C said SWM had made administrative errors on documentation regarding her pension. This included spelling and grammatical errors and incorrectly completed forms regarding changes in her income. She also said there had been a delay in her annual review which took place late. Given the repeated nature of the errors Mrs C had lost confidence in SWM's ability to manage and administer her pension. She didn't think they had earned their 1% fee and she wanted a full refund of all charges for the management of her pension and its investments as the service had been poor.

SWM said that Mrs C was not complaining about its advice just about administrative errors. In particular a double printed letter with text on the reverse of the letterhead, a missing field in her valuation spreadsheet and spelling error. The forms to increase her regular pension were completed incorrectly. She also listed other inaccuracies. It agreed that the documents it sent should not have contained these errors. It upheld her complaint.

It felt the impact was moderate as it caused some inconvenience but she wasn't put to any trouble. It felt 1% of fees was excessive as this would be just under £10,000. The delay in the annual review was to allow both Mrs C and her husband to meet with the adviser at the same time. Also COVID lockdowns delayed this but a video conference was held in February 2021. It had apologised for the errors. It later agreed it would increase the compensation from £100 to £200

The investigator said the errors had not caused any financial loss but upset and loss of confidence. He said that the £100 offered by SWM wasn't enough but felt £200 would be fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

Mrs C didn't agree.

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.

SWM has accepted that it has made errors. I can therefore consider an award for financial loss and distress and inconvenience. I have not seen any evidence that there has been any financial loss and the parties seem to accept this. I have therefore considered an award for the distress and inconvenience caused by the error.

Such an award is to reflect the impact on Mrs C not to punish SWM. We are all inconvenienced at times in our day to day lives and it is not unusual to experience a certain level of frustration and minor annoyance when dealing with a financial business. I need to consider whether the impact of the errors was more than someone would expect to

experience in everyday life.

I note that there have been a variety of errors. Including wrong dates, delay in an annual review, spelling errors and errors in a form regarding changes to income. While in isolation some may seem minor it is clear that the repeated and continuing nature of the errors has, as Mrs C says, caused her to lose confidence in SWM. She was particularly concerned by the error in the income form which she feared would have progressed incorrectly had she not spotted the error. I think it is reasonable that the repeated nature of these issues eroded her confidence. But I note she had not terminated her relationship with SWM due to these errors. I think the recurring nature of the errors over a period of months added to the impact. I am of the view that the upset caused was more than one would expect from day to day life.

In the light of the impact on Mrs C, the recurrent nature of the errors and the time over which they occurred I think an award of £200 is fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

I note that Mrs C does not complain about the advice she has received nor whether it was suitable for her. So I don't think it would be appropriate to refund the management charges she has paid to SWM. I say that because I have reviewed the errors and the impact on Mrs C and concluded that the award of £200 is fair and reasonable. I do not think that a higher award nor one based on the charges applied would be appropriate for the reasons I have given.

Putting things right

I think SWM, should pay Mrs C a total £200 for distress and inconvenience. For the avoidance of doubt this includes the £100 if it has already paid that amount in respect of this complaint. It need only pay such further amount as is required to increase the total amount to £200.

My final decision

I uphold this complaint.

I direct that Succession Wealth Management Ltd should within 30 days of this service informing it that Mrs C has accepted my decision, pay Mrs C a total £200 for distress and inconvenience. For the avoidance of doubt this includes the £100 if it has already paid it, and it need only pay such further amount as is required to increase the amount to £200

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs C to accept or reject my decision before 13 February 2023.

Colette Bewley
Ombudsman