

The complaint

Mrs B complains about the way that National Savings and Investments (NS&I) dealt with queries she raised about her account.

Mrs B wants NS&I to compensate her for lost interest and the time she spent trying to resolve the problem.

What happened

Mrs B holds an account with NS&I. She was unhappy that despite asking NS&I to amend the nominated bank account associated with her NS&I account to display her married name, the account she viewed on her user screen still displayed her maiden name.

As Mrs B uses the associated bank account to receive payments from her NS&I account, she was concerned about withdrawing money from NS&I in case it was rejected due to the wrong surname being used.

Mrs B says she contacted NS&I several times and was given conflicting information about how to resolve the problem.

NS&I explained to Mrs B that the nominated bank account showed her married name so it did not uphold her complaint.

After Mrs B came to our service, NS&I said that it should have been aware that it was her added UK bank account which showed her maiden name and that it could have removed this account. NS&I said it could not amend the name on the added bank account as it was also her nominated bank account. NS&I said it had removed the added account showing Mrs B's maiden name and offered to pay £50 compensation.

Our investigator upheld Mrs B's complaint. He thought NS&I should pay more compensation than it had offered so far. Our investigator thought it unreasonable that it took five months to resolve a simple issue and for this, he recommended that NS&I pay £200 compensation. Our investigator didn't ask NS&I to cover any lost interest and said he couldn't comment on any failings with the complaints process as complaint handling is not a regulated activity.

NS&I disagrees with the investigation outcome saying £200 is too high an award. NS&I says its agents can only see the nominated bank account and not any others that Mrs B had added.

NS&I says that the nominated account correctly displayed Mrs B's married name – it was only the bank account she had added which had her maiden name. NS&I said that Mrs B should make sure not to select the added account. NS&I could not understand why Mrs B was so reluctant to make the withdrawal. NS&I also pointed out that Mrs B made successful withdrawals in July and September 2023.

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 realise that I have summarised this complaint in less detail than the parties and I have done so using my own words. I have concentrated on what I consider to be the key issues. The rules that govern the Financial Ombudsman allow me to take this approach. But this doesn't mean I have not considered everything that both parties have given to me.

NS&I recognises that it should have explained things better than it did when Mrs B asked for help. Despite NS&I's reassurances, Mrs B was understandably concerned about making payments to a bank account which did not display her married name. It also looks as though the situation could have been easily fixed had NS&I explained sooner that Mrs B could remove and re-add the bank account that displayed her maiden name.

Mrs B says she contacted NS&I several times over a few months and was given conflicting information. I don't have reason to dispute Mrs B's recollection of events. So, I consider that based on the inconvenience and concern caused to Mrs B, £200 compensation seems a fair way to put things right. It's within the range of award we might make where the mistake has taken a reasonable amount of effort to resolve. Our approach to awards like this is on our website. The award of £200 includes the £50 already offered by NS&I.

Putting things right

To put things right, NS&I should pay Mrs B £200. For the avoidance of doubt, NS&I can deduct any compensation already paid in respect of this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. In full and final settlement, I require National Savings and Investments to put things right as set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 18 March 2024.

Gemma Bowen
Ombudsman