

## **The complaint**

Mr P complains that National Savings and Investments won't cash-in his savings certificate. He also complains it won't send the certificate back to him.

## **What happened**

Mr P was given a bond certificate by his father. He recently attempted to cash this certificate in but NS&I informed him that the bond had already been cashed in. Mr P complained to NS&I. He said he is still in possession of the bond certificate so queried how it could've already been cashed in.

In its final response NS&I explained that the bond had previously been paid. Although it wasn't able to provide details of the recipient. It said it only retains sufficient information in its computer records to enable the status of individual bonds to be confirmed to customers. Mr P wasn't satisfied and brought his complaint to this service. He said he had the certificate and sent all the original documents to NS&I and it has refused to pay out. He would like this bonds paid out.

Our investigator concluded NS&I hadn't done anything wrong by not paying out the bond. But as it hadn't responded to Mr P's request to return the certificate he recommended NS&I pay him £75 for the distress this caused.

Mr P didn't agree and asked for a decision from an ombudsman. He didn't agree that the bond had been paid out and questioned why it would pay out without the original documents.

## **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 this will come as a disappointment to Mr P but having done so I won't be asking NS&I to do anything further, for the reasons I've outlined below.

NS&I has said the certificate in question has previously been repaid. It said due to the passage of time it couldn't provide documentary evidence but it has an electronic record confirming that an old Savings Certificate had been cashed in on 29 February 2000 and that the payment was made on "Cert missing" lines i.e. the certificate wasn't surrendered at the time. I've seen a screen shot of the NS&I system confirming this.

I understand Mr P's strength of feeling in this matter. He is concerned that NS&I have claimed to pay out without sight of the certificate and that this amounts to theft or paying out to the wrong person.

The pay out date is 24 years ago. It is reasonable to expect that NS&I would not still have a complete record of the pay out including the recipient of the funds. It is able to confirm the pay out date and that it completed the transaction without the certificate. This is not necessarily unusual. It explained that it issues millions of replacement certificates and bank

books and occasionally the originals come to light some time later. Provided NS&I could confirm the identity of the legitimate recipient then it's within its rights to pay out without the certificate.

Mr P has also said that his parents wouldn't have cashed in the certificate as they couldn't speak or write English. While I'm not disputing any language barrier it doesn't automatically follow that they would not have cashed in the certificate. It's not possible to establish with any degree of certainty exactly what happened who cashed it in.

I'm satisfied NS&I has done relevant checks to try to establish what happened and I'm persuaded the certificate was cashed in in 2000 by Mr P's parents or another legitimate recipient.

Mr P is also unhappy that NS&I didn't return the original certificate. NS&I said it only retains the scanned image of documentation sent to it. It said the original surrendered certificate will have been destroyed. But, it said, as the certificate had been cashed in on "certificate missing" lines, it is of no value anyway. Mr P is concerned that this is illegal. As NS&I has said the certificate was cashed in 24 years ago, and I'm satisfied it likely was, I'm persuaded the certificate held no value. But I do agree with the investigator that NS&I could have explained this to Mr P sooner than it did which caused him unnecessary distress. So I think NS&I should pay him £75 in compensation and it has agreed to do so.

I understand this is not the outcome Mr P was hoping for, but I'm persuaded NS&I hasn't made an error by not allowing Mr P to cash in the certificate he was holding so I won't be asking it to do anything further in respect to that.

### **Putting things right**

To put things right National Savings and Investments must pay Mr P £75 in compensation for the distress caused.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint and National Savings and Investments must put things right as set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr P to accept or reject my decision before 14 June 2024.

Maxine Sutton  
**Ombudsman**