

The complaint

Mrs S complains Nationwide Building Society didn't open a savings account or bond and says she missed out on two years of interest payments. She's also unhappy as she has been unable to close her account as requested.

What happened

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I will not repeat them again here in detail. In summary, Mrs S says she placed £85,000 into a savings account or bond with Nationwide in April 2022 but didn't receive any documentation for the account.

Nationwide say Mrs S didn't open a savings account or bond but opened a FlexAccount, which is a type of current account, but it doesn't pay any interest. It says Mrs S would have been provided the terms and conditions of the account at the time of opening. Nationwide say it would have been reliant on the Royal Mail for Mrs S to receive her debit card and pin number. So Nationwide didn't uphold Mrs S' complaint.

Mrs S remained unhappy so referred her complaint to our service. Our investigator considered the complaint but didn't uphold it. They said there wasn't enough evidence to show Mrs S opened a savings account or bond with Nationwide. They did say that Nationwide should close the account as Mrs S had requested.

Mrs S didn't agree and asked for an Ombudsman to review the complaint. So the complaint has been passed to me for a decision.

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.

Where the evidence is incomplete, inconclusive, or contradictory (as some of it is here), I reach my decision on the balance of probabilities - in other words, what I consider is most likely to have happened in light of the available evidence and the wider circumstances.

I'm sorry to hear about the difficult time Mrs S has had and about the loss of her husband. I can see that Mrs S feels strongly about what has happened and I want to assure her that I have reviewed all of the documents and correspondence before reaching my decision. And while I may not refer to every point raised by Mrs S, I have taken into account everything she has put forward.

I have no doubt that Mrs S wanted to earn interest on her money. She added a significant sum to the account. There is clearly a dispute about what was said when the account was opened. But there isn't any significant information available from the time of opening the account. As a result, I need to look at the wider context of the complaint.

I've looked at the audit history provided by Nationwide for when the account was opened, and I think it's more likely than not the account was opened over the phone in a Nationwide

branch. I note that Mrs S says she was not given any documentation to suggest the type of account she had opened or a debit card, so I've considered the other information, such as various bank statements, which suggest she had a current account which made no interest.

I appreciate Mrs S says she hasn't received any documentation until March 2024, but I can see the statements are correctly addressed and I haven't been given any reasons as to why Mrs S wouldn't have received these statements.

Nothing in the information and evidence provided suggest Mrs S opened a savings account or bond, but had she done so, I would have expected her to question the current account sooner than she did, especially as the statements sent to her show this account did not incur any credit interest.

I appreciate Mrs S held the view that this account was a savings account. Whilst I understand this confusion, I am afraid I am going to disappoint her when I say I am not persuaded, on the evidence, that this was due to any error by Nationwide.

Mrs S also asked for her account to be closed and Nationwide advised her of how this can be done. Nationwide have said they haven't received a letter from her requesting that the account be closed. But Mrs S has removed almost all her funds from the account and it's clear she wants the account closed so I agree with the investigator. So Nationwide should now look to close her account as per her request without her needing to be put through any unnecessary inconvenience.

My final decision

For the reasons mentioned above I don't uphold Mrs S' complaint about Nationwide Building Society.

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

Jag Dhuphar
Ombudsman