

## **The complaint**

Ms T complains about the service she has received from National Savings and Investments (NS&I) in relation to a Children's Bond opened in her name many years ago.

## **What happened**

Ms T came across some paperwork relating to a NS&I Children's Bond her parents had opened for her in the 1980's. The paperwork indicated there was a balance of £2,487.60. As Ms T didn't recall withdrawing the money, she contacted NS&I asking it to trace the bond and pay her the balance in it.

NS&I initially said it didn't have any records of the bond as it didn't keep records dating back more than six years. It later said it had located the bond, but it had been repaid. And due to the passage of time, it couldn't provide evidence to show where the balance had been paid to.

Ms T referred a complaint to this service. She said the information she had been given was conflicting and that NS&I should be able to explain where the money went.

In responding to our enquiries, NS&I explained that it had since traced two Children's Bonds in Ms T's name. It provided screenshots of the activity on the bonds which indicated the funds had been repaid in 2001 (£1,459.20), and 2002 (£2,426) – copies of which have been provided to Ms T.

But NS&I acknowledged it had given Ms T some incorrect information when it initially responded to her complaint. It offered to pay her £50 compensation as an apology.

One of our investigators looked into the complaint. She said that NS&I was unable to provide details of where the money had been paid due to its data retention policy. But she thought NS&I had provided enough persuasive evidence to show the bonds had been repaid. And she thought the £50 compensation payment NS&I had now offered – for the incorrect information provided in its complaint response, was fair.

Ms T didn't agree. In summary, she said NS&I's data retention policy had left her without crucial evidence to follow up where the money was now. And she felt that NS&I had dismissed her interactions with it. She said a fair resolution would be for NS&I to pay her £2,487.60.

Ms T asked for an ombudsman to look into her complaint. So, the complaint has been passed to me to reach a final 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.

Having done so, I agree with the outcome reached by the investigator. I know Ms T will be disappointed as I can see she feels strongly that NS&I could do more to help, so I'll explain why.

I appreciate that Ms T has come across paperwork showing that NS&I held a Children's Bond in her name with a balance of £2,487.60. And that she doesn't recall withdrawing the funds or closing the bond.

But any letters – in themselves, don't prove the bond is still open. And, since the complaint has been with us, NS&I has been able to provide evidence of two bonds that were held in Ms T's name. However, NS&I says this shows both bonds were repaid. Having looked at the evidence - which I have no reason to doubt is accurate, I'm satisfied that the bonds were repaid in 2001 and 2002 respectively.

I know Ms T is keen to know where the funds were paid to. And she feels that NS&I should still have this information. But NS&I (like many financial businesses including this service) is not obliged to retain customer records or details of any correspondence it sent indefinitely – usually, no more than six years. So, I don't find it unusual that NS&I no longer has all the information available about the bonds when they were repaid over 20 years ago.

While Ms T doesn't recall receiving the funds – which is also understandable given the passage of time, I'm satisfied that NS&I has now done what it can to trace the accounts and has provided sufficient information to show the bonds were repaid.

I am persuaded that NS&I could have handled Ms T's enquiries better than it did when she first contacted it. It initially told Ms T it had no record of a bond in her name which was incorrect. And Ms T had to pursue the matter further to get the information NS&I has since provided. NS&I has now offered Ms T £50 in recognition of this. I find this offer fairly reflects any inconvenience caused to Ms T in having to follow up this matter.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons given above, I uphold this complaint in part. National Savings and Investments should contact Ms T and arrange to pay her £50 compensation.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms T to accept or reject my decision before 12 November 2024.

Sandra Greene  
**Ombudsman**