

The complaint

Mr U complains The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society Limited trading as Foresters Friendly Society (Foresters) unfairly charged him for an overseas payment following the maturity of his savings plan.

What happened

Mr U says he held a savings plan with Foresters which matured in February 2024. Mr U says he asked for the funds to be sent to his bank account overseas as he no longer lived in the UK and his UK bank account had been closed as a result. Mr U says without informing him, Foresters deducted £30 from the payment in charges and feels he has been discriminated against simply because he is not a UK resident with a UK bank account.

Mr U says it is not his fault he no longer has a UK bank account and Foresters never mentioned this could be an issue when he opened the savings plan. Mr U wants Foresters to refund the fees it charged him for the international transfer.

Foresters says it wrote to Mr U when the savings plan was due to mature, at which point he explained he didn't have a UK bank account and asked for the funds to be sent to his bank account overseas. Foresters says it explained to Mr U in an email it wouldn't be responsible for any charges incurred in sending an international payment and as Mr U didn't respond it sent the funds to the overseas bank account he originally requested.

Mr U wasn't happy with Foresters' response and referred the matter to this service.

The investigator looked at all the available information but didn't uphold the complaint. The investigator felt Foresters had confirmed to Mr U in July 2023 in an email, that he would be liable for any fees or charges incurred for an international transfer. The investigator says Mr U forwarded that email to Foresters in January 2024 when requesting an update on the maturity of his savings plan, so he would have been aware of the charges at that time.

Mr U didn't agree with the investigator's final view and asked for the matter to be referred to an ombudsman for 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 won't be upholding this complaint and I will explain how I have come to my decision.

I can understand it would have been frustrating for Mr U to have international payment fees deducted from his maturing savings plan payment by Foresters, simply because he no longer held a UK bank account.

When looking at this complaint I will consider if Foresters acted unreasonably when an international payment fee was deducted from Mr U's maturing savings plan, following a

payment to his overseas bank account.

Mr U's complaint centres around the fact an international payment fee of £30 was deducted from the maturing funds sent by Foresters to his overseas bank account. Mr U feels he has been discriminated against because he no longer holds a UK bank account and permanently lives overseas, unlike other UK residents. Mr U also says he wasn't made aware of this potential charge when he took out the savings plan.

While I understand the points Mr U makes here, I'm not fully persuaded by his argument. I say this because firstly Foresters couldn't be expected to have known at the time the savings plan was taken out, that Mr U was no longer going to hold a UK bank account when the plan matured in February 2024.

What is important here is Foresters did send an email to Mr U in July 2023 explaining if he wanted to send the maturing funds to an overseas bank it wouldn't be responsible for any fees that might occur. From the information I have seen Mr U chased for an update on the maturing savings plan in January 2024, enclosing the email chain which explained the possibility of charges occurring, so it's fair to say Mr U was aware of this before the payment was sent, as instructed by him in February 2024 to his overseas bank account.

It's also worth saying any UK resident who requests a payment to be made by Foresters to an overseas bank account would also face any potential international bank charges, so I can't say Mr U has been discriminated by the fact he lives overseas. While I understand Mr U no longer holds a UK bank account due to his overseas residency, I can't hold Foresters responsible for that and there's no evidence to suggest Mr U ever asked them to make alternative arrangements for the payment.

While Mr U will be disappointed with my decision, I won't be asking anymore of Foresters.

My final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr U to accept or reject my decision before 2 December 2024.

Barry White
Ombudsman