

The complaint

Mr S is unhappy because he's been unable to get online access his daughters Junior ISA ("JISA"), held with Family Equity Plan Limited ("FEP"), for several months.

What happened

In October 2023, Mr S set up a JISA for his daughter with FEP. The following month, Mr S set up another JISA with FEP in error, which he then asked FEP to close. FEP cancelled the incorrectly opened second JISA as per Mr S's request and merged the two profiles for Mr S's daughter to try to pre-emptively avoid any login issues the existence of two profiles might have caused.

In December 2023, Mr S contact FEP as he couldn't login to his daughter's JISA online. FEP tried to resolve the issue but were unable to do so. And over the next several months, Mr S contacted FEP on numerous occasions to try to regain online access to his daughter's JISA, without success. And when FEP continued to be unable to resolve the problem and restore Mr S's online access to the JISA, Mr S raised a complaint.

FEP responded to Mr S and apologised for the trouble he was experiencing and explained that they were doing everything they could to restore Mr S's online access. Mr S wasn't satisfied with FEP's response, so he referred his complaint to this service.

One of our investigators looked at this complaint and liaised with Mr S and FEP about it. At that time, FEP reappraised their position on this complaint and offered to pay £150 to Mr S as compensation for the frustration and inconvenience not having online access to the JISA had caused.

Our investigator felt that FEP's prior apology and new offer of £150 compensation represented a fair outcome to this complaint and noted that Mr S had still had access to the JISA via other channels. Mr S disagreed, so the matter was escalated 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.

I can appreciate how it would be frustrating for Mr S to have been unable to access his daughter's JISA online from December 2023, with my understanding being that Mr S continues to be unable to access the JISA online to this day. And I've noted Mr S's comments that he always intended to manage the JISA online (and that FEP actively promote online management of their accounts as the primary channel to do so), and that he is concerned about his ability to manage his daughter's JISA which he fears may impact her financial future.

But upon review, I'm satisfied that FEP have been trying to resolve this issue for Mr S but have unfortunately been unable to do so. It isn't the role of this service to 'punish'

businesses for not being able to resolve an issue such as the one Mr S is experiencing here. But it is within my remit to consider the impact of what's happened on Mr S and to assess whether I feel FEP's apology and offer of £150 compensation is fair.

However, as an impartial and independent party I also have to consider that while Mr S has been unable to access the JISA online, he has still been able to access the JISA via other channels, including via telephone or by issuing instructions to FEP via written letter. So, while Mr S has certainly been frustrated and inconvenienced by being unable to access the JISA online, I feel that this impact is mitigated to some extent by Mr S still being able to access the JISA via other channels – albeit less preferable and convenient ones for Mr S.

Additionally, I also have to consider whether Mr S could have reasonably taken any action himself to have mitigated against the trouble and upset that he's experienced here. And having done so, I feel that one action Mr S could reasonably have taken here would have been to transfer the JISA to another provider.

Given that Mr S has stressed the importance of him being able to access the JISA online, and that Mr S could have transferred the JISA at any time to another provider, I'm not persuaded that it would be fair or reasonable to consider FEP to be solely accountable for the full extent of Mr S's dissatisfaction here.

This is because I feel that Mr S could reasonably have mitigated against some of his dissatisfaction by instructing the transfer of the JISA to another provider, rather than continuing to press for a resolution to the issue which I feel that FEP had demonstrated over the many months that this issue had been ongoing that they might not be able to provide.

All of which isn't to suggest that Mr S hasn't been unfairly impacted by his being unable to access his daughter's JISA online. I accept and acknowledge that he has. But it is to say that I feel that the impact is mitigated by Mr S being able to access the JISA via other channels, and also that I feel that Mr S could reasonably have taken action himself which would have mitigated the extent of the dissatisfaction that he's experienced.

In consideration of these points, I feel that apology and offer of £150 compensation that FEP have made to Mr S does represent a fair resolution to what's happened here. And I can confirm that £150 compensation is commensurate with what I might have instructed FEP to have paid to Mr S here, had they not already offered to do so. I take this position in consideration of all the factors I've discussed above, as well as in consideration of the general framework this service uses when assessing compensation amounts, details of which are available on this service's website.

I realise this won't be the outcome that Mr S was wanting, but it follows that while I will be upholding this complaint in Mr S's favour, I'll only be doing so to instruct FEP to pay the £150 compensation to him that they've already offered to pay. And I won't be issuing any further or alternative instructions to FEP beyond this – although it would be expected that FEP would continue to try to resolve Mr S's accessibility issue as an ongoing priority. I hope that Mr S will understand, given what I've explained, why I've made the final decision that I have.

Putting things right

FEP must pay £150 to Mr S.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint against Family Equity Plan Limited on the basis explained above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 27 February 2025.

Paul Cooper
Ombudsman