

The complaint

Mr D, who is represented by his father, complains Forester Life Limited trading as Foresters Financial switched his Child Trust Fund without authority to do so.

What happened

In October 2024 Mr D's father complained to Forester Financial that it had switched the funds in his son's Child Trust Fund without authority. He asked for his son's fund to be put back into the position it would have been had the switch not happened.

Forester Financial looked into the issue Mr D's father had raised and said that the fund originally selected was one that was meant to have "life-styling" switched on when his son reached the age of thirteen, that this had subsequently been changed to the age of fifteen but that he could have opted out of this change. Forester Financial said that it had sent a letter to Mr D's father in January 2024 via its online portal reminding Mr D's father that "life-styling" would be switched on when his son reached the age of fifteen unless he opted out within a month. Forester Financial said that Mr D's father didn't reply at the time so "life-styling" was switched on. Forester Financial said, in the circumstances, that it had done nothing wrong. In the meantime, Forester Financial said that it had put a halt to any further "life-style" changes with immediate effect.

Mr D's father wasn't happy with Forester Financial's response and made a formal complaint on behalf of his son. Forester Financial looked into this complaint and again said it had done nothing wrong. Mr D's father wasn't happy with the amount of time the complaint took or the number of times he'd had to contact Forester Financial to get issues looked into. Nor was he happy with Forester Financial's response. So, he complained to our service saying that Forester Financial hadn't shown, amongst other things, that he'd agreed to their terms and conditions.

One of our investigators looked into Mr D's complaint and said that they didn't think Forester Financial had done anything wrong. Mr D's father disagreed and asked for the complaint to be referred to an ombudsman for a decision. This complaint was, as a result, passed to me.

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 read this complaint, I can see that Mr D's father has complained about a number of issues and following our investigator's response has raised at least one new issue – namely the way an agent introduced himself when he initially contacted him. I'm satisfied that our investigator has answered all of the points Mr D's father has raised, and I agree with what they've said. For that reason, I'm going to focus on what I consider to be the key issues in this complaint. I mean no discourtesy to Mr D or his father.

I can see that Mr D was born in February 2009 and as such was eligible for a Child Trust Fund – a government scheme in relation to which HMRC has issued regulations. Foresters

Financial wasn't the original provider but took over Mr D's fund in January 2017. I'm satisfied that when Forester Financial did so it stepped into the shoes of the original provider. In other words, it took on a Child Trust Fund that originally was going to have "life-styling" applied when Mr D turned thirteen, subsequently amended by HMRC to apply from the age of fifteen. In addition, I'm satisfied that Foresters Financial sent Mr D's father a letter in January 2024 – via its online portal – reminding him that his son's fund would have "life-styling" applied from February 2024 – in other words, once his son had turned 15 – unless Mr D's father opted out before then. Mr D's father didn't do so and, as a result, Forester Financial – in line with HMRC regulations – started to apply "life-styling" to Mr D's fund.

I agree with our investigator, given everything I've said, that Forester Financial didn't do anything wrong when it applied "life-styling" to Mr D's fund. I also agree that Forester Financial handled this complaint well, answering the various points raised throughout the complaint. In short, I agree that it's not a complaint that I should be upholding.

My final decision

My final decision is that I'm not upholding this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D to accept or reject my decision before 15 April 2025.

Nicolas Atkinson
Ombudsman