

The complaint

Mr H and Mrs M are unhappy with Nationwide Building Society. I'll refer to Mr H throughout the decision as he has dealt with the issues.

Mr H is upset because he didn't get details when his bonds reached maturity, no annual statements are sent out anymore, and the FlexPlus account fee is increasing.

What happened

Mr H said he visited a branch to get annual tax interest statements. But he was unhappy with the service from Nationwide as he had to keep asking for these rather than Nationwide just provide them in the post. Mr H said it was inconvenient to come back annually to get these interest statements. During the visit Mr H said Nationwide claimed it wasn't going to log his dissatisfaction as a complaint. He said he was told it would take 15 days to get the statements as staff couldn't print them off.

During the visit Mr H was also told about two instant access bonds that he held that had matured some time ago, but he wasn't notified. He asked when he had been reminded of this. Mr H said he always renewed his bonds when he was informed. Mr H said bonds he holds with other financial institutions automatically roll over at maturity into a new bond. He said he had missed out on higher returns due to not being informed. Mr H wasn't given the opportunity to arrange new bonds there and then, he would need to come back.

Mr H said he did get a complaint started about this but didn't hear from Nationwide until he chased up and then it sent him a final response saying it couldn't help.

Mr H would like the bonds reinstated from the maturity date, and compensation for the poor service.

Nationwide didn't accept it had done anything wrong. It apologised and said regarding its Annual Savings Summaries it conducted customer research a few years before and found the majority of members didn't value these as they could view all their information online. Regarding the maturing bonds it again apologised but confirmed maturity instructions had been automatically generated before the final date and Nationwide was relying on the postal service for delivery. It said any issues with post was beyond its control. In relation to the increase in the FlexPlus account fee it said this hadn't risen since 2017. But noted the cost of providing insurance had increased, it stated customers were still getting the benefits at value for money rather than taking out separate insurances. Nationwide concluded if the FlexPlus was no longer suitable for Mr H it did offer a range of fee free current accounts he could switch to.

As Mr H remained unhappy, he brought his complaint to this service.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. He said in relation to the matured bonds he had reviewed letters from Nationwide sent to Mr H at his address explaining maturity was imminent and informing him of next steps. Our investigator sent Mr H the copies of the letters and confirmed the dates and bonds they applied to. Regarding the annual summaries

he didn't think Nationwide was at fault. He noted it had written to Mr H informing him it would no longer be posting statements. So, he accepted Mr H had been made aware. Our investigator also noted Mr H could call Nationwide to request the statements and so avoid any inconvenience. He said Nationwide could only be held responsible for making sure it dispatched the letters, not for arrival – that was down to the postal service.

Our investigator didn't think it was unreasonable for a further appointment and discussion to take place before reinvesting the matured bonds, although he accepted Mr H would have found this frustrating. He said it would take time to set up. Our investigator concluded that anything that was about complaint handling isn't a regulated activity and this service can't investigate.

Mr H remained unhappy and asked for his complaint to be passed 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've reviewed all of the evidence provided in this complaint. But I will only be commenting on what I see as the central factors.

I can understand Mr H's frustrations. He is clear that he was unaware of the issues until he visited the branch that day. I think it's perfectly understandable that he was upset and frustrated by what he found out and how he couldn't get matters resolved there and then. I think it's clear that was why he raised a complaint.

But on review of the evidence, I can see why Nationwide feels it hasn't done anything wrong.

Annual summary statements

I understand Mr H wanted these statements to still be sent by post. And I accept his point that he thinks many customers would feel the same way. I agree with him. I noted Nationwide's point about conducting research with members to check what they wanted. But it's clear that Nationwide let him know in writing that this change was going to happen, and it would no longer be sending out the statements. It has produced evidence showing it wrote to Mr H notifying him of the change. I think that's fair.

I totally accept visiting the branch to get these statements would be inconvenient and time consuming. I think Mr H makes a fair point. But our investigator noted Nationwide could send these to him if he called in.

Bond maturity

I don't dispute that Mr H didn't get the statements Nationwide sent him. But I've seen the copies of the correspondence sent to him, showing the dates, his address, and details of the products. It's clear that Nationwide did send them. So, I can't say that Nationwide acted unfairly or unreasonably here.

I've no reason to doubt what Mr H said about what other financial institutions do when a bond matures but here I can only look at what Nationwide did. And I think it acted fairly and reasonably.

There's no counter evidence suggesting Nationwide didn't send out the letters around either the stopping of statements or the maturing of the bonds. So, I accept Nationwide did send the letters out, to the right person, at the right address, at the right times.

FlexPlus account fee

Again, I can understand Mr H not being happy with an increase in fees. Nationwide explained this as follows:

"I am really sorry you are unhappy with the decision to increase the FlexPlus account fee. The FlexPlus fee has remained unchanged since 2017. However, since then the cost of providing this insurance has risen. Despite the increase you will still be getting benefits that offer value for money compared to taking out separate insurances.

If you find the FlexPlus account is no longer suitable for you. we offer a range of fee free current accounts that you can switch to."

I think that's a fair and reasonable answer. And Nationwide offered Mr H the chance to consider alternatives if other accounts would suit him better.

Service

I think Mr H wanting to resolve the bonds and therefore deal with any issues of receiving low interest levels right away when he found out about this makes sense to me. But I do accept that isn't something Nationwide would be able to just conclude for him there and then. Even if that would only add to his frustration. I don't think the staff member was unreasonable when she suggested he may have more luck with this at the weekend. It feels like she was trying to see if she could help him get this done quite quickly by making such a suggestion. But I accept it may not have felt like that to Mr H.

Similarly, when Mr H found out it would take days to get the statements and these couldn't be printed in branch. I accept this was frustrating, but I can't say it's unfair or unreasonable.

I can't get into the details of how Nationwide handled Mr H's complaint as such issues aren't regulated activities.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

I make no award against Nationwide Building Society.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H and Mrs M to accept or reject my decision before 20 June 2025.

John Quinlan
Ombudsman