

The complaint

Mr R complains that Bank of Ireland (UK) Plc trading as Post Office Financial Services (the Post Office) has failed to trace the money he held in a savings account.

What happened

Mr R had a Post Office 'instant saver' account. He has shown us copies of two deposit slips showing payments into the account, the last one dated April 2009. He insists that he never closed the account and that there's approximately £1,800 still in the account. He wrote to the Post Office in October 2024 asking for the account to be closed.

The Post Office said it had no record of any monies in the account, and that the account number had been repurposed and allocated to another customer. So it would've been closed for more than seven years. It doesn't have records beyond that seven-year period. It confirmed it had carried out a thorough search of its records.

On referral to the Financial Ombudsman Service, our Investigator said they had no evidence that the Post Office had made an error so couldn't uphold Mr R's complaint.

Mr R didn't agree and the matter has been passed to me for an Ombudsman's consideration.

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.

Where the evidence is incomplete or contradictory, as some of it is here, I have to make my decision based on what I think is most likely to have happened. But it may be that I can't make a finding and if this is the case I shall say so. I have a duty to be impartial so I have to assess both parties' evidence fairly.

I understand that Mr R is unhappy that money he had in a savings account has gone missing. Although the only evidence he has of this account appears to be two deposit slips from a paying in book, the last one dated April 2009. On one slip, there's a handwritten note of the balance on the account but I've not seen any other evidence, such as a passbook or more recent statements.

I'm not clear either why Mr R didn't try to access the accounts between 2009 and 2024. So the deposit slips are not evidence of an active account. In such cases we would expect the provider of the account, in this case the Post Office, to carry out a thorough search for any money still in the account. And the Post Office has sent us full details of the searches it has carried out with unfortunately no result.

As the Post Office has advised us, it doesn't keep records going back more than seven years and this is in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. So as it's likely that the account was closed more than seven years prior to Mr R's request then it is unlikely

to show in any Post Office records.

The Post Office has confirmed that if there was a balance on the account it wouldn't have closed it. And even if an account hasn't been used for more than three years any balance on it can be transferred to a dormant register where the record would be kept indefinitely.

I'm not persuaded in this case that it's likely that there are any monies still in Mr R's savings account. I know this will be disappointing to Mr R as he's insistent that he wouldn't have closed it but from the evidence I've seen I can't find that the Post Office still retains any money invested in that account. If Mr R has any other evidence of the account then I would invite him to share that with the Post Office. But as it stands and as I think the Post Office has carried out all the necessary searches, I can't require it to take any further action.

My final decision

I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 14 July 2025.

Ray Lawley
Ombudsman