

The complaint

Miss S complains National Savings and Investments hasn't paid her the proceeds of a bond that her parents opened for her.

What happened

Miss S's parents opened a capital bond for her when she was a child.

In January 2025 Miss S contacted National Savings and Investments to say she'd like to cash in her bond. She had a statement from 2006 showing that the bond had just over £5,000 in it. Miss S says National Savings and Investments told her that it no longer had a record of her bond on its systems as its information didn't go back that far and that it must have been cashed out already. Miss S complained to our service as she was unhappy with National Savings and Investment's response.

Following our involvement, National Savings and Investments sent us information showing that the capital bond Miss S's parents had opened had matured and had been paid into another bond in 2008. And that this bond had been cashed in and the proceeds paid to an account in Miss S's name in 2010.

Our investigator forwarded this information to Miss S and said that National Savings and Investments could have established this earlier. In the circumstances, even though our investigator was satisfied Miss S had received the proceeds of her bond meaning it wouldn't be appropriate to compensate her for that, our investigator thought that National Savings and Investments should pay Miss S £75 in compensation for the unnecessary distress and inconvenience she'd experienced.

Miss S accepted our investigator's recommendations. National Savings and Investments didn't. National Savings and Investments said it didn't have the information when it spoke to Miss S that ultimately led it to discover what had happened to the account and that the original answer it gave – that the bond must have been paid out – was correct so it hadn't done anything wrong. National Savings and Investments said Miss S's complaint was that she hadn't been paid when in fact she had been. In short, National Savings and Investments didn't agree that it should be paying compensation and questioned whether this complaint was one we had jurisdiction to look into. For those reasons, National Savings and Investments asked for Miss S's complaint to be referred to an ombudsman for a decision. Her 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.

We do get complaints from people who have found an old statement or passbook, for example, relating to an account that hasn't been active for many years. In some of those cases, the businesses are able to show that the account has been closed. In others, the businesses are able to trace the account – and often it's been made dormant. In some cases, following an investigation the customer's memory is jogged, and they recall that they closed the account. In short, these types of complaints aren't unheard of and because it's invariably the discovery of an old statement or passbook that triggers the customer to approach the business, these are complaints we can look into because typically the event the customer is complaining about is that the business has failed to find the account or pay over the proceeds. For those reasons, I don't agree that we cannot look into this complaint.

In this case, based on everything I've seen, I've no reason to doubt that Miss S genuinely believed she still had an account with National Savings and Investments. That's despite the fact that I'm satisfied the proceeds of that account were paid to her in 2010. In the circumstances, I agree with our investigator that National Savings and Investments could have done a better investigation and that it shouldn't have taken our involvement to ultimately get to the bottom of this. Or, to put it another way, I agree that National Savings and Investments could have put Miss S's mind to rest much sooner than it did. I also agree, for the reasons I've just given, that this is a complaint we can uphold and that a small award of compensation is appropriate.

Putting things right

Based on everything I've said, I agree that an award of £75 is fair and reasonable. So, that's the award I'm going to make.

My final decision

My final decision is that I'm upholding this complaint and require National Savings and Investments to pay Miss S £75 in compensation in full and final settlement of her complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss S to accept or reject my decision before 14 August 2025.

Nicolas Atkinson
Ombudsman