

## **The complaint**

The estate of Mrs B complains about Hargreaves Lansdown Asset Management Limited trading as Hargreaves Lansdown ('HL'). The estate is unhappy with HL's requirements for closing a deceased person's accounts.

Mrs B's estate is represented by Mrs O.

## **What happened**

Mrs B sadly passed away in late 2024. Mrs O, on behalf of the estate, sent HL notification of Mrs B's passing, and in return they sent her their 'estate application pack'.

Following this, Mrs O sent HL a copy of Mrs B's will, along with instructions to close the trading account and ISA that Mrs B had held with them.

HL replied, saying that each page of the will needed to be certified. Mrs O sent this to HL, and they proceeded to close the accounts. However, Mrs O was unhappy she had been asked to provide the will a second time, as certifying every page was inconvenient and incurred further expense. She felt it was an onerous process.

Mrs O referred the complaint to our service, but our investigator did not think it should be upheld. As Mrs O disagreed, the case has been 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.

Mrs O has explained that she doesn't feel HL is justified in requiring a copy of the will certified on every page, given that the legal requirement is only for the will itself to be certified. She points out that this policy isn't in line with the two other financial institutions she's dealt with while administering the estate, and she thinks HL's process is flawed.

Mrs O doesn't dispute that HL set out their requirements clearly in their estate application pack. And I can see that on receiving the information their policy set out that they required, HL carried out the account closures and transfer of funds within a reasonable time period. So what I am considering here is only whether HL's requirement for a will to be certified on every page was reasonable for them to have in place.

Financial institutions are entitled to set their own policies and procedures, taking into account relevant regulations and laws. This includes policies in relation to what they need from an estate when a customer passes away. I accept HL's requirement for a page by page certified will may go above the legal requirement, but that in and of itself does not make it a flawed, unfair or onerous process. And I cannot uphold this complaint simply on the basis that HL's requirement is above that of the legal requirement.

HL have a duty to safeguard an estate's assets until they are able to distribute them in the correct manner. It is reasonable for them to take this duty seriously, and if HL have chosen

an approach that is slightly more cautious than that taken by another business, that is a legitimate exercise of their discretion. Ultimately, every business will have different perspectives on risk management.

So overall, while I appreciate Mrs O considers HL's requirement to be unreasonable, taking everything into account, I'm not persuaded it was.

I empathise with Mrs O that administering an estate, even a small one, can be a very bureaucratic and time-consuming process. What I am considering in this complaint is whether HL have done anything wrong in these circumstances. And as explained above, I do not think that they have.

### **My final decision**

I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask the estate of Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 10 December 2025.

Artemis Pantelides  
**Ombudsman**