

The complaint

Mrs C and Mr W complain they were given an incorrect valuation of their individual ISAs and joint unit trust account by St. James's Place Wealth Management Plc ("SJP"). They say that as a result, they encashed the investments, incurring a loss of around £10,000. They would like this refunded, as well as compensation and a refund of all the fees they've paid to SJP.

What happened

In response to the complaint SJP explained that the incorrect valuation had resulted from a misreading of the couple's holdings by the adviser. Their ISAs were valued at around £60,000 each and their joint unit trust account around £12,000. However, the joint account showed on both their on-line profiles, leading to the adviser inadvertently double counting it and overvaluing the accounts by around that amount.

SJP acknowledged the error and apologised for it. But it was satisfied the valuations for all the accounts were correct when they were encashed and that all the relevant charges had been correctly applied.

Mrs C and Mr W weren't satisfied with SJP's response and referred the matter to this service.

Our investigator didn't think that Mrs C and Mr W had suffered any financial loss because of the adviser's error. She was satisfied the loss they'd incurred on encashment was performance related (they had originally invested £140,000 in 2021).

She considered whether they might've acted differently had they been given a correct valuation. But she concluded they would most likely have still proceeded with the encashments as the money had been needed to support their daughter at university and that requirement would've remained.

The investigator did however feel that Mrs C and Mr W would've suffered a loss of expectation on discovering the correct valuation. So, she recommended SJP pay £200 to compensate for this, which it agreed to do.

Mrs C and Mr W didn't accept the investigator's view. They felt they'd been lied to and maintained that a full refund of all the charges they'd paid to SJP was warranted. The investigator explained that the complaint concerned only the issue of the incorrect valuation and not the advice, both initial and ongoing, they'd received. She explained that any concerns regarding that would have to be raised separately with SJP.

They maintained they should be paid the £10,000 they felt they'd lost because of the adviser's error. So, as no agreement could be reached, the matter was referred to me to review.

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.

For clarity, the complaint I'm considering here concerns solely the adviser's error in providing Mrs C and Mr W with the incorrect valuation. During the investigation, as noted, they've raised additional concerns relating to the advice they received over the two years they were invested with SJP. I understand that SJP has addressed those separately and if Mrs C and Mr W aren't happy with the response they've received, it may be that they can refer that issue on to us to be considered.

But in respect of the adviser's error, I think a plausible explanation has been provided, along with an apology from SJP. I appreciate the issue will have been frustrating for Mrs C and Mrs W and they'll have been disappointed when they discovered the error. But I'm not persuaded they were actively lied to by the adviser, and I'm satisfied that SJP generally took reasonable steps to respond to their concerns.

That said, I agree with the investigator that the matter warrants some compensation for the disappointment – the loss of expectation – caused, and I think £200 is a fair amount. The £10,000 (approx.) loss on the investment that Mrs C and Mr W incurred was not a result of the error, it was a result of the investments falling in value due to market performance. They received back the correct amount that they were entitled to.

I appreciate that if they'd been told the correct valuation at the outset, it may have influenced how they chose to proceed. They've said they'd have left the investments as they were and waited until they regained value. But, on balance, given that the money was clearly required, I think more likely than not, correctly informed, they would still have proceeded to encash. And ultimately, while I accept it would've been an inconvenience, they did also have the option of reinvesting to recreate the accounts when they discovered the error.

Putting things right

SJP must pay Mrs C and Mr W £200 to compensate them for the distress and inconvenience caused by the loss of expectation.

My final decision

For the reasons given, my final decision is that I uphold the complaint and direct St. James's Place Wealth Management Plc to compensate Mrs C and Mr W as set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs C and Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 13 March 2026.

James Harris
Ombudsman