

The complaint

Mrs D has complained that her account with OneSavings Bank Plc trading as Kent Reliance Banking Services ('KRBS') isn't eligible to be managed online.

Mrs D has been represented in bringing her complaint, by her daughter, Ms D.

What happened

Ms D operates Mrs D's account with KRBS. KRBS sent Ms D a letter, dated 13 June 2023, advising that Mrs D's one-year fixed-term bond was about to mature, and what the options were – including reinvestment of the funds. Ms D then called KRBS to say she'd seen a better rate online, than that offered in the letter. There was no option to open the account with a higher rate over the phone; rather, a postal application would need to be completed. And, she was told an email she'd received saying she could register for online services was incorrect – as this wasn't an option for accounts with an operator. Ms D feels this is discriminatory.

One of our investigators looked into what had happened. She asked KRBS why consumers with an account with an operator, for example when a Power of Attorney is in place, couldn't use the online services. It advised that this is a system capability issue, as their platform doesn't allow them to create user access logins for accounts that are managed by a third party. She felt this was a reasonable explanation. She also noted that this information is clear on KRBS's website and in the account terms and conditions.

Our investigator also looked into a point Ms D made about postal times. That is, if an account operator needs to use the postal system, this could lead to delays, meaning the account holder could miss out on preferential rates. But, she could see that Ms D had been told that, should the fixed-term bond mature and KRBS transfers the balance to a new account, there would be a 14-day cooling off period, giving her time to receive the application and send it back to KRBS. But, she also noted that in the preceding two years, Ms D hadn't responded to the maturity option letters on either occasion – so in both instances KRBS transferred the funds into a new account with the interest rate on the maturity options letters.

Our investigator said she may have agreed with Ms D that it was unfair of KRBS to only accept postal applications for accounts with an operator, if the interest rates for postal applications were different to those offered online – but this isn't the case here. As KRBS customers who make applications via post can open accounts with the same interest rates as those who open them online, she was satisfied it hadn't acted unfairly.

Finally, our investigator looked into Ms D's concerns that, where a PoA is in place, accounts can't be opened over the phone. But she was satisfied that, as of May 2023, requests to move to an account with a higher interest rate cannot be made over the phone. This applies to all accounts – not just those with an operator.

Ms D responded, and said that as regards her not having completed the maturity forms in the preceding two years, she could have been in breach of her duty to her mother, had she

taken the risk that interest rates would have gone down.

The complaint's now 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.

Having done so, I'm not upholding it. This is for the same reasons as given by our investigator.

I don't think it's ideal that the platform doesn't allow for third parties to use online banking. I can understand why this would be frustrating, and I hope it's something that will change in the future. However, I don't think it disadvantaged Mrs D, as Ms D was still able to manage the account by post – and would have received the same interest rate as those managing accounts online. I appreciate this couldn't be done by phone, but this applies to all customers.

As regards potential fluctuations in interest rates, my understanding is that the rates would be clear before any new account was opened. It would then be a matter for the individual's judgment as to which rate to go with.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, it's my final decision not to uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs D to accept or reject my decision before 3 November 2025.

Elspeth Wood
Ombudsman