

The complaint

Mr W complains about the customer service he's received from National Savings and Investments ('NS&I') in relation to bonds he holds with it.

What happened

Mr W has held some premium bonds with NS&I for many years, with them being opened in 1961, 2005 and 2006 respectively. Mr W called NS&I in February 2025 because he was having difficulty opening a new bond through its website. NS&I's agent said that Mr W would need to write into NS&I if he wanted his older bonds to be added to his online records. The agent then opened a new bond for Mr W over the phone and Mr W deposited £10,000.

Mr W wrote to NS&I about some premium bond details he had. He asked NS&I for information about these bonds, including if they had won a prize over the years and he asked for some of them to be assigned to his daughter. Some of those bonds were held in Mr W's late wife's name and some appear to have been his daughter's. I won't comment on any of the bonds not held in his name – or any concerns he may have about those – in this decision.

NS&I wrote to Mr W and said he needed to provide a witnessed signature, before it could go ahead with a change of details. Mr W wrote back shortly after, explaining why he felt it unnecessary for him to do what NS&I had asked. Mr W also raised further concerns. He wanted to know whether an individual should have two Holders Numbers and questioned why this had happened to him. And he asked why some of his bonds had not been showing on NS&I's App.

NS&I said it had made an error when asking Mr W to provide a witnessed signature and it arranged to pay him £50 to apologise for that. It also confirmed that it had traced all Mr W's bonds and had merged them under one Holders Number.

Mr W asked us to consider his complaint. The Investigator thought NS&I's compensation offer was fair. They didn't think the other parts of his complaint should be upheld. As Mr W disagreed, the case has been passed to me to decide.

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.

I'm sorry to hear of Mr W's bereavement, and I hope he'll accept my condolences on the loss of his wife. I appreciate this must be a very difficult time for him.

It appears that the crux of Mr W's concerns are the questions of why he had two Holders Numbers and whether this should have happened. He says these questions have not been answered but I'm persuaded they have.

Firstly, during a phone call about his complaint, NS&I explained to Mr W that he shouldn't

have two Holders Numbers and that's why it merged them after he had written to them about his bonds. Secondly, it explained to Mr W why he had two Holders Numbers. It said that this was because there was likely a difference in the information submitted for his more recent bond – such as the spelling of Mr W's address or some other details, for example – compared to the details NS&I held for his other bonds. It indicated that even a relatively small difference in spelling, for example, could have caused its system not to match Mr W's details to his existing bonds.

It seems that NS&I is unable to say exactly which piece of information caused this, now that it has merged Mr W's Holders Numbers. It's possible, for example, that NS&I's agent could have input a piece of information incorrectly when setting up the new bond over the phone. Or it could equally be that previous information provided was incorrect, or that something has changed over time. Either way, though, I don't consider it makes a difference here. Once NS&I was aware of the issue, it took steps to correct it within a reasonable timescale and it explained to Mr W what had happened, why, and what it had done to resolve it. While I appreciate Mr W may have expected a different answer or more information, I think the actions NS&I took were fair. His bonds are all now shown under one Holders Number.

In relation to some of Mr W's bonds not showing on NS&I's App, this was because Mr W's older bonds were not registered for its digital service. I appreciate Mr W may have been worried that not all his details were showing on the App after his new bond was set up. But I note NS&I's agent said, when setting up the new bond over the phone, that he would need to write to NS&I if he wanted all his bonds to be added to its digital records. When Mr W later wrote to NS&I in March 2025, it arranged that for him following an investigation and when merging his Holders Numbers. I think that was fair and I don't think it took an unreasonable amount of time for NS&I to do it.

It's clear that NS&I made an error when asking Mr W to provide a witnessed signature, following his letter dated 10 March 2025. And so, NS&I's letter requesting this information and referring to "changes", didn't need to be sent. NS&I accepts it didn't need to ask Mr W to do that, and it has paid him £50 in recognition of the impact it's caused. I can see this issue caused Mr W some frustration and concern and I think NS&I's offer fairly recognises that.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't require National Savings and Investments to do anything further.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 5 January 2026.

Keith Barnes
Ombudsman