

## **The complaint**

Mr and Mrs S complain that The Prudential Assurance Company Limited ('Pru') have failed to provide an annual investment bond statement to them in an acceptable format.

## **What happened**

After not receiving their annual bond statement (ABS) on 31 October 2023, Mr and Mrs S requested a hard copy be sent to them and asked for it to be added to their online portal. Pru subsequently sent a hard copy to Mr and Mrs S, but explained that they were unable to upload it to their portal as it's an automated system.

Shortly afterwards, Mr S decided to formally complain to Pru. In summary, he said he was unhappy that they'd not received the ABS nor that it had been added to the online portal.

After reviewing Mr and Mrs S's complaint, Pru apologised for the oversight, explaining that a system error had meant the statement wasn't uploaded. A hard copy was subsequently sent, and Pru said that from October 2024, the statement would be sent in the post as they'd done so in previous years. To apologise, Pru explained that they were sending them a payment for £300.

Having received the hard copies of the ABS in the post, Mr S wasn't happy with the quality of the statement received. He explained that he'd received two copies of their ABS which were printed on photocopier paper, single sided, in black and white, neither of which he considered to be acceptable. He went on to say that some government organisations do not accept printed copies from online accounts, so he wanted a proper printed version like he'd had in the past.

Mr S said that the characteristics of the ABS sent out each year, all share the same format:

- They are printed on high quality Pru stationery
- They are printed in colour
- They are printed double sided, including the covering letter
- They are printed at high resolution

Mr S explained that taken together, that makes the ABS identifiable as an original document by inspection. He went on to say that the new versions he'd recently received on photocopier paper, wouldn't be acceptable as an original document.

As Pru were unable to facilitate Mr S's request, he referred his complaint to this service. In summary, he said that he was unhappy Pru had not sent him an ABS and that they'd been unable to facilitate his request to reissue his statement in the same standard that he'd

previously received. Mr S explained that it would be very simple for Pru to resolve the complaint to his satisfaction. He said:

- As Pru have the PDF version of his statement (which was sent to them on 11 January 2024), he'd like them to print it out in colour and on stationery of the same quality used for prior correspondence.
- If no such printer exists at Pru anymore, he'd like them to send the PDF out to a local print shop that does have such a machine.
- If such an approach isn't feasible, Pru can send him the blank stationery, and he'll arrange to have it printed on a suitable quality printer at his local print shop.
- Alternatively, Pru can inform him of the type and brand of stationery previously used for annual statements, and he'll obtain his own supply.

The complaint was then considered by one of our Investigators. He concluded that he wasn't able to direct Pru how they present statements to their consumers; he did however feel that the £300 Pru had offered for their customer service failings and not sending the statement out originally was fair and reasonable to settle the complaint. Unhappy with that outcome, Mr S then asked the Investigator to pass the case to an Ombudsman for a decision.

### **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 have summarised this complaint in less detail than Mr and Mrs S have done and I've done so using my own words. The purpose of my decision isn't to address every single point raised by all of the parties involved. If there's something I've not mentioned, it isn't because I've ignored it - I haven't. I'm satisfied that I don't need to comment on every individual argument to be able to reach what I think is the right outcome. No discourtesy is intended by this; our rules allow me to do this and it simply reflects the informal nature of our service as a free alternative to the courts.

My role is to consider the evidence presented by Mr and Mrs S and Pru in order to reach what I think is an independent, fair and reasonable decision based on the facts of the case. In deciding what's fair and reasonable, I must consider the relevant law, regulation and best industry practice. Where there's conflicting information about what happened and gaps in what we know, my role is to weigh up the evidence we do have, but it is for me to decide, based on the available information that I've been given, what's more likely than not to have happened.

Mr and Mrs S raised a number of complaint points with Pru that were dealt with in the two resolution letters issued on 19 March 2024 and 10 July 2024. As Mr S has confirmed the only point that remains outstanding and not addressed to his satisfaction is the quality of Pru's ABS documentation that he's been provided with for 2023, my decision will focus purely on that element of the complaint. And, having done so, I'm not upholding this element of Mr and Mrs S's complaint - I'll explain why below.

As a result of an IT issue, Mr and Mrs S didn't receive their normal statement in 2023. Pru later sent them an electronic PDF copy of that statement for their records. However, Mr S prefers to receive their statements in the format that he's always received them in, on paper

and on special Pru stationery, in colour and printed by a laser printer. But it seems in this particular instance, Pru haven't been able to provide that option for him; they have sent their 2023 ABS on white photocopier paper, printed in black and white. Mr S says that hard copy doesn't bear any of the hallmarks of an official statement.

Unfortunately, it's not within the remit of this service to set out to firms how the statements that they issue to consumers are either presented or what's included within them. That's a commercial decision for them to determine. So, whilst I appreciate that Mr S would prefer his statements to be printed in a particular manner, that isn't something that I can instruct Pru to do.

Mr S has set out a number of ways in which Pru could remedy matters for him – however, I can't instruct them to facilitate any of those approaches for him, it's up to them to decide whether that's a path they wish to follow.

Our Investigator has commented that he's of the view the £300 Pru have already offered for the customer service shortcomings and failure to send the original ABS out was fair and reasonable. Having looked at the issues raised, I'm also satisfied that offer is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. I understand that Pru have already made that payment to Mr and Mrs S.

### **My final decision**

I'm not upholding Mr and Mrs S's complaint point about the quality of the annual statement provided and as such, I won't be instructing The Prudential Assurance Company Limited to take any further action on this particular issue.

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

Simon Fox  
**Ombudsman**