

The complaint

Mr W complains that Scottish Equitable Plc trading as Aegon (“Aegon”) failed to provide him with online access to information about his pension savings for an extended period of time.

What happened

Mr W held pension savings with Aegon. He reports that from September 2024 he was unable to reliably access information about his pension savings using Aegon’s online system. And he says that because of those problems he found it very difficult to contact Aegon by phone. In June 2025 Mr W transferred his pension savings to another provider.

Aegon has dealt with Mr W’s complaints about his lack of online access in two final response letters – sent in October 2024 and January 2025. In those letters Aegon apologised for the problems that Mr W was facing and explained they were the result of issues caused by an upgrade of its systems. Whilst it couldn’t provide Mr W with a timescale for when things would be back to normal it assured him that the issue was receiving the highest priority. But Aegon told Mr W that it had no contractual responsibility to provide him with online access to information – and it said that the information he wanted could be provided either by letter or through its phone support teams. So it didn’t think there were any grounds to refund any of the administration charges that Mr W had paid. Aegon did however offer Mr W £200 for the inconvenience he’d been caused. Unhappy with those responses Mr W brought his complaint to us.

Mr W’s complaint has been assessed by one of our investigators. He said that he thought Aegon had provided Mr W with all the services required by the terms and conditions of his pension plan. So whilst he understood why the lack of online access was frustrating for Mr W he didn’t think Aegon needed to pay him any compensation.

Mr W didn’t agree with that assessment. So, as the complaint hasn’t been resolved informally, it has been passed to me, an ombudsman, to decide. This is the last stage of our process.

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.

In deciding this complaint I’ve taken into account the law, any relevant regulatory rules and good industry practice at the time. I have also carefully considered the submissions that have been made by Mr W and by Aegon. Where the evidence is unclear, or there are conflicts, I have made my decision based on the balance of probabilities. In other words, I have looked at what evidence we do have, and the surrounding circumstances, to help me decide what I think is more likely to, or should, have happened.

At the outset I think it is useful to reflect on the role of this service. This service isn’t intended to regulate or punish businesses for their conduct – that is the role of the Financial Conduct Authority. Instead, this service looks to resolve individual complaints between a consumer

and a business. Should we decide that something has gone wrong we would ask the business to put things right by placing the consumer, as far as is possible, in the position they would have been if the problem hadn't occurred.

As Mr W is aware, Aegon has faced some problems with its online systems since it undertook some changes in August 2024. It doesn't appear that Aegon, despite its best efforts, had been able to find a robust solution to some of those problems before Mr W decided to move his pension savings to another provider. So that has meant that access to its online systems for some customers has been intermittent, or at times entirely unavailable, and some of the data that has been shown has been incorrect. Aegon accepts how disappointing that will have been for some of its customers.

But I think it is important to say here that I haven't seen any evidence to make me think that Aegon is required to provide the online access that has been unavailable. When the majority of the affected pension plans were taken out online access did not form part of the terms and conditions. So I don't think that being unable to offer reliable online access means that Aegon is not fulfilling its contracted obligations for which it is charging its administration fees.

The information that Mr W has been unable to receive online was available to him through other means. I accept that the problems Aegon has faced with its online systems does mean that its telephone advisors have been exceptionally busy, and there are sometimes extended wait times for callers. But Aegon also offers other channels for consumers to get in touch such as email, secure messaging, or general post. I have seen that, in response to Mr W's complaints, Aegon has been able to send him comprehensive statements of his pension investments and their values.

Mr W doesn't receive any advice from Aegon with regard to his pension investments. So, the choice of those investments is ultimately a decision for Mr W to make. Aegon does provide Mr W with information about the past performance, and investment aims, of the various funds that are available. But should Mr W be unhappy with how any particular investment has performed, it would be up to him to first of all identify that concern and then instruct his pension provider to switch his pension savings into a new investment of his choosing.

I understand how disappointing it will have been for Mr W not being able to reliably access information about his pension savings using the online service. But, as I've explained, that service isn't something that Aegon is required to offer. And any wider concerns that Mr W might have about the way in which Aegon manages its IT infrastructure would be a matter for the regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority.

I have seen that Mr W has now chosen to transfer his pension savings to another provider. So any ongoing problems that Aegon might have with its systems will no longer impact him. I hope that he is now able to access the information he needs more readily as he prepares for his retirement.

As I said earlier, Aegon offered Mr W £200 for the inconvenience he had been caused by the unavailability of its online systems. I will leave it with Mr W to contact Aegon should he now wish to accept that offer.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, I don't uphold the complaint or make any award against Scottish Equitable Plc trading as Aegon.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 14 January 2026.

Paul Reilly
Ombudsman