

The complaint

Mr G complains that due to errors by Secure Trust Bank Public Limited Company, his application for a one-year fixed rate bond expired and he lost the opportunity to invest at a competitive interest rate.

What happened

Mr G's previous investment with Secure Trust matured and Secure Trust asked for Mr G's maturity instructions. Mr G chose to invest in a one-year fixed rate bond and went through a telephone application with an adviser on 21 February 2025. A letter was sent on 26 February 2025 telling Mr G it needed to see some evidence of his address before the application could proceed. That evidence was received by Secure Trust on 7 April 2025. Two days later, Secure Trust told Mr G his application had expired because the identification hadn't arrived within 30 days of the application being made.

Mr G complained. Secure Trust didn't uphold Mr G's complaint. It said the identification hadn't been received within the 30-day window allowed and so the application expired as Mr G had been told it would. Mr G escalated his complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service where one of our investigators considered his concerns.

Secure Trust sent its business file and made an offer to resolve Mr G's complaint. It said that when its agent had spoken to Mr G on 25 March 2025, they hadn't told him his application had already expired. And they should have told him that. And so Secure Trust said it had not been transparent with Mr G and offered compensation of £100.

Our investigator considered that Secure Trust's offer was fair. They said Secure Trust had dealt with Mr G's application in line with its processes and procedures and hadn't done anything wrong in relation to the application. But they did feel Mr G should have been told his application had expired at the first available opportunity. So, they felt the £100 offer was fair. Mr G asked that his concerns were considered by an ombudsman as he didn't agree. So, it's 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 realise this will come as a disappointment to Mr G, but I don't think Secure Trust did anything wrong when it dealt with his application and its offer of compensation for the delay in telling him the application had expired is to me fair.

I've listened to the call Mr G had with Secure Trust's agent on 21 February 2025. Mr G says he was told on the call the application had gone through. And that is what the agent said. But they then said that Mr G would get a confirmatory e-mail in three to four days that the account had been opened, provided no further information was required. Mr G asked for the confirmation to be sent to him by post not email.

A letter was sent on 26 February 2025 telling Mr G that it hadn't been possible to verify his address electronically and so he needed to send address verification to Secure Trust. The letter said "It's important we receive this information as soon as possible. This application is valid up to 30 calendar days from the day you started completing it. If you pass the 30 days, you will need to re-apply."

I'm satisfied therefore that Mr G was aware of the time limit on getting the information to Secure Trust.

Mr G says he doesn't see why Secure Trust had to verify his address. But the terms and conditions of the account say at section 5.1 "For existing Account Holders, we may need to re-confirm your identity and permanent address if you are opening a new Account. We may collect information from third party agencies." I don't find that Secure Trust did anything wrong by asking for physical evidence when the electronic method failed.

Mr G says he sent the information to Secure Trust in good time. And I don't doubt that. But Secure Trust did not receive the information until 7 April 2025. I can't say what caused the delay, but it would be unfair of me to hold Secure Trust responsible for mail not being delivered. So, it follows that I accept the identification was received too late for the original application to proceed.

But I do find Secure Trust to be at fault for not telling Mr G his application had expired sooner. Had it done so, Mr G could possibly have started a new application. But he was denied that choice. And so, I think Secure Trust did fail in its customer service.

Putting things right

Secure Trust has said that it should have told Mr G that his application had expired when its agent spoke to him on 25 March 2025. But that didn't happen. And Secure Trust accepts that this was a failing in its service. It offered £100 for the error which Mr G didn't accept. But I think that offer is fair and therefore I award Mr G the sum of £100 for the distress and inconvenience he's been caused.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. I award Mr G the sum of £100 for distress and inconvenience and, provided Mr G accepts my decision, I direct Secure Trust Bank Public Limited Company to pay this sum to Mr G if it hasn't already done so.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr G to accept or reject my decision before 13 January 2026.

Stephen Farmer

Ombudsman