

complaint

Mr J is unhappy that The Prudential Assurance Company Limited won't modify its payment instructions so that his annuity numbers will be displayed on his bank statement.

Mr J is represented by Mr W.

background

Mr J receives six annuity payments of similar amounts each month. Mr W is finding it hard to keep track of the payments because Mr J's bank statement doesn't show any individual reference numbers.

Mr W complained to the bank to see if it would change the way it displayed the information on its statements to include reference numbers. The bank said that it wasn't able to manually override the statements to add the reference numbers in. One of my ombudsman colleagues said it wasn't reasonable to expect the bank to do this.

Mr W then contacted The Prudential to see if there was any way it could change its payment instructions to include the reference numbers. The Prudential said that the way that it sends payments meets the requirements to make an automated payment. It offered to send Mr W statements so he could track the annuity payments but said that it wasn't able to make a change to the whole of its payment system for one customer.

Our investigator didn't recommend that the complaint should be upheld. She noted that The Prudential had tried to make some local changes when processing the payments but unfortunately they had been unsuccessful. She had a lot of sympathy with the difficulties that Mr W was facing, but ultimately she was unable to say that The Prudential had to do anything more.

my findings

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 anticipate that I'm going to disappoint Mr J and Mr W further as I've come to the same conclusions as our investigator and for much the same reasons.

I can appreciate that all Mr W wants to do is be able to reconcile Mr J's incoming payments with ease. But I'm not a regulator, so I'm not able to require a financial business to change its systems nor can I tell it what processes it should use. So I'm not going to be able to provide the outcome that Mr J and Mr W are seeking.

The problem is occurring because there's not enough room to display the full reference of "PRUDENTIAL ANNUITIES" plus the individual reference number of the annuity payment on the same line. The Prudential has explained that it can't change the text in this reference field easily for one customer and it would have to change the whole of its payment system.

The Prudential has tried to find local arrangements to help. It's unfortunate that these haven't worked or would be too onerous to work in practice.

Whilst I can completely understand why Mr W is frustrated, I can't see that there's any mistake in the way that The Prudential is making its payments to Mr J. So I'm not able to say that The Prudential needs to do anything more than it has already done.

my final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr J to accept or reject my decision before 28 March 2017.

Claire Marsh
ombudsman