

complaint

This complaint is about the distress Mr K says he suffered when he viewed his on-line pension with AEGON Investment Solutions Limited whilst abroad. His account was showing a nil balance despite him having around £25,000 in his pension at the time. Mr K thought his account may have been hacked.

Mr K felt his initial enquiries were ignored by AEGON and he wants compensation for the distress and inconvenience this has caused to him.

background

Mr K was travelling abroad from January to April 2017. AEGON wrote to Mr K about a proposed transfer of his pension to a digital account called Retiready. AEGON wrote to Mr K in January 2017, February 2017 and March 2017. The transfer completed in March 2017 and AEGON wrote to Mr K to confirm what he needed to do to activate his new account.

Mr K checked his account online in March 2017 which showed a nil balance. And so he contacted AEGON about this. AEGON replied on 24 March 2017 to confirm that the account hadn't been fully activated which is why the value wasn't showing. It also provided a telephone number for Mr K to call if he needed help with this.

Mr K felt he had only received automated replies from AEGON and so he raised a formal complaint. AEGON rejected Mr K's complaint as it felt it had responded to Mr K in a timely manner.

Mr K was unhappy with AEGON's response and asked this service to investigate his complaint.

Our adjudicator didn't uphold Mr K's complaint and said AEGON had sent Mr K adequate information about the transfer of his pension.

Mr K disagreed with our adjudicator. In summary, he said he was aware his pension was moving to a new account, but didn't think AEGON's letters were clear about the need to re-register for the Retiready platform. He thought his new account would simply migrate onto the existing system.

And so the case has been passed to me for a decision.

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 don't think Mr K's complaint should be upheld. I'll explain why.

I agree with the adjudicator and broadly for the same reasons. Our adjudicator initially thought that Mr K hadn't received the three letters AEGON sent to him in early 2017. But Mr K has subsequently confirmed he did receive AEGON's letters but didn't think they adequately explained the new on-line log in procedures for him to view his pension on the new platform.

When Mr K contacted AEGON in March 2017, AEGON didn't realise he was looking at the closed account until he replied to its final response letter. In addition, AEGON wasn't aware that Mr K was out of the country. But AEGON says that had Mr K called, it would have cleared up any confusion.

Mr K has said that AEGON sent automated responses to Mr K but having looked at AEGON's correspondence, I don't agree. AEGON told Mr K on 24 March 2017 that he hadn't yet activated his account and also sent Mr K a telephone number to call if he had any further concerns.

I've also looked at the letters sent to Mr K before his account was transferred. The letters sent in February 2017 and March 2017 both explained that Mr K would need to activate his new online account.

Mr K has said it wasn't made clear to him that a new registration would be required. And he doesn't agree that it should have been required. But I think clear instructions were given and if AEGON requires a new registration for a new account, I don't think this is unreasonable. AEGON offered to help with the registration process and gave Mr K a telephone number to call.

I accept that Mr K may have suffered some distress when he viewed his online account which showed a nil balance. But he had been told by AEGON that his pension was being transferred and so he would have been aware that some changes were due to take place. Mr K was able to contact AEGON to clarify this. And I think AEGON replied to Mr K within a reasonable amount of time and provided a telephone number which Mr K could have used if he continued to feel distressed.

As AEGON had written to Mr K between January and March 2017, I think this should have alerted Mr K to the fact that some changes would be taking place on his account. I understand why Mr K was distressed by seeing a nil balance. But this was because he hadn't registered and activated his new account. And I don't think AEGON are responsible for that.

my final decision

For the reasons set out above, 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 K to accept or reject my decision before 30 April 2018.

Shamaila Hussain
ombudsman