

complaint

Mr J complains that The Prudential Assurance Company Limited has provided him with poor service in recent years.

background

Mr J, who is in his mid-50's, has a pension plan with Prudential. In recent years he has had meetings with advisers and spoken with Prudential employees. He says he hasn't been treated properly in several of the exchanges.

He met with his financial adviser in December 2015 and again in February 2016. It was agreed he wanted to take a lump sum from the pension, but he didn't want a regular income at that time, but he wanted to place his funds in a low risk investment.

The lump sum was paid to him in June 2016. He also wanted to withdraw a further lump sum in December 2016 which again was paid to him some six months later. During these periods Mr J believes Prudential hasn't been professional.

He also felt that he had done most of the work in sorting out his pension funds and so believed he shouldn't pay the administration fees charged by Prudential. He also said that Prudential didn't update his change of address and sent letters to the wrong address.

The complaint was considered by one of our investigators. In her view the investigator said that Mr J had raised a complaint in 2012 to which Prudential responded in 2013 and due to the passage of time we couldn't consider this matter. She also noted Mr J had made a separate complaint in 2015 which had been brought to this service, but which he had later withdrawn. Therefore she looked only at events since 2015.

She noted that in 2016 Mr J had been sent the wrong form by Prudential to process the withdrawal. However it responded by not insisting on the correct one being completed and used the information Mr J had provided to deal with the payment. The withdrawal required a manual calculation, but payment was made a few weeks after the application had been received. The investigator didn't think this was unreasonable.

She also looked at the issue of the wrong address being used and noted that Prudential had received a form signed by Mr J which contained the incorrect address and it had used this. She could only identify one letter which had been sent out to this address.

Looking at the second withdrawal she saw that Prudential had failed to return several of his calls as promised, but she also noted that it had attempted to make a number of calls to Mr J but failed to get hold of him. She recognised that Mr J had felt frustrated, but she considered the £50 paid by Prudential was fair.

At the time of the June 2017 payment the cheque took longer to reach Mr J than expected and he made several calls to Prudential. It tracked the letter and later contacted Mr J to make sure it had arrived, but it accepted there had been a short delay and paid him a further £100 compensation.

Overall, she concluded that there had been some customer service issues, but they were fixed quickly and at no detriment to Mr J who had been paid £150 in compensation. She didn't think Prudential need do more.

Mr J didn't agree with the investigator's view and said Prudential had shown a long term lack of etiquette and professionalism in its dealings with him.

my findings

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

It's clear that Mr J feels he has been let down by Prudential. I can appreciate his frustration and I recognise his health issues, but I don't believe Prudential has been unprofessional. Due to the rules by which this service operate I am unable to consider the events prior to 2015.

I have reviewed its internal records and noted that it has been trying to make things as easy as possible for Mr J. That hasn't always worked and where things have gone wrong it has apologised and paid him compensation. I can see that it has met with him several times to help establish what he wanted done with his pension. I have seen nothing to show that the advice and support offered by Prudential at this point was anything less than professional.

In terms of the subsequent handling of his requests there were several glitches, an incorrect form was sent, several calls weren't returned and there was delay of a few days in the second payment being made.

Prudential accepted the information on the form without the need for a second one being completed and so I think it responded sensibly to that issue. On the matter of returning his calls I can see that were a couple of times when this didn't happen as requested by Mr J, but I also note that Prudential did try on quite a few occasions to call him, but without success. I know Mr J preferred to speak to one individual rather than have to explain the situation to a new person and the business tried to accommodate that, but in reality it can be difficult for a large business to provide this level of personalised service.

Overall I consider there were few issues along the way, for which Prudential has apologised and paid what I consider to be fair compensation. I recognise Mr J will be disappointed with my decision, but I don't consider I can ask Prudential to do more.

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 17 August 2018.

Ivor Graham
ombudsman