

The complaint

Mr T has complained about Vernon Building Society (Vernon). He said he was given unclear and confusing information about his fixed term bond. He said by dealing with this with Vernon, he has incurred additional cost and inconvenience. Mr T would like compensation for this.

What happened

Mr T held a one-year fixed rate bond with Vernon, and it matured on 30 November 2022. Vernon wrote to Mr T to inform him of this, and to give details of a new one-year fixed rate bond that Mr T's money would be automatically transferred to, unless alternative instructions from him were received.

Mr T was not happy with the letter that was sent by Vernon about this. He said it gave unclear information. He said Vernon said a statement would be issued in early December. But, said Mr T, it didn't specify what year this would be. He said it should have said December 2022. Mr T said it would have been helpful if it had been clearer in its communication here.

Mr T said Vernon made a mistake in the same letter and said in an attached document that he would receive a statement following maturity on 30 November 2023. He said he was puzzled about this statement as his bond matured on 30 November 2022. Mr T complained to Vernon about this.

Vernon said in response that it wrote to Mr T providing details about the maturity of his bond. It said in addition it provided a summary box giving details of the new one-year bond that Mr T's money would automatically transfer into unless it was given an alternative instruction. It said it considered its communication to be satisfactory, so it didn't uphold Mr T's complaint.

Mr T was not happy with Vernon's response and referred his complaint to our service. He said Vernon failed to address his complaint or apologise for what he thinks are clear errors made. He said the person responding to his complaint was also the person who sent the original letter in the first place and didn't think this was right. He said Vernon should provide acceptable compensation and suggested a minimum of £150.

An investigator looked into Mr T's complaint. She said she didn't think Vernon needed to take any action. She said she didn't think the communication from Vernon was misleading and provided sufficient information. She said she didn't think Vernon made any errors and what it was looking to explain to him about his fixed term bond, was clear.

Mr T is not in agreement with the investigator, and he asked for a review. So as this is the case his complaint has been passed to me, an ombudsman, to look into.

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 am not upholding Mr T's complaint. I will explain why:

- I have read the letter that was sent by Vernon to Mr T in November 2022, about the maturity of his fixed rate bond and can see what Mr T is referring to.
- Mr T said it would have been helpful if Vernon had been clearer in its letter. He said Vernon wrote he would receive a statement in early December. Mr T said it would have been clearer if this said December 2022. I can see Vernon mentioned in the same paragraph that Mr T's bond was maturing on 30th November 2022 though. So, I think it would have been clear, what year Vernon was referring to when it said it would issue a statement in early December.
- Mr T said Vernon made an error and said he would receive a statement on 30 November 2023. He said he was puzzled when the bond is maturing on 30 November 2022, so, he said, why wait for a statement on 30 November 2023.
- Again, I have seen the statement he is referring to, on the attached document that came with the letter. Vernon said "Unless told otherwise the existing funds in your maturing bond will automatically be deposited into the account. You will receive a statement following maturity on 30 November 2023 confirming your deposit"
- I can see that the attached document, that includes this statement, relates to what would have been the new one-year fixed rate bond that was maturing in 2023. Vernon's statement related to that bond and not the one that was maturing in 2022. So, I don't think Vernon made an error here.
- In conclusion, I don't think Vernon made any errors when it sent the maturity letter to Mr T. So, I don't think it needs to apologise or pay any compensation to Mr T.
- Finally, Mr T said the same member of staff that sent the maturity letter also responded to his complaint. He said this was not acceptable and not good complaint handling. I acknowledge what Mr T is saying here. But it doesn't change the outcome of his complaint. I have now looked at what Mr T is complaining about and independently, have concluded that Vernon didn't do anything wrong here, when it sent a letter to him about his fixed rate bond, in November 2022.

I appreciate that my decision will be disappointing for Mr T but based on everything I have read and the findings I have given, I don't uphold his complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold Mr T's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr T to accept or reject my decision before 2 February 2024.

Mark Richardson
Ombudsman