

## **The complaint**

Mrs W complains that Coventry Building Society (CBS) provided her with poor service and delays regarding her Individual Savings Account transfer.

## **What happened**

Mrs W is unhappy that CBS have sent out letters relating to an ISA transfer initiated in branch after she specifically requested no letters to be sent out. She says she is concerned by the amount of personal information which is included in the correspondence such as her name, address, national insurance number and her account details. Mrs W made a complaint to CBS.

CBS partially upheld Mrs W's complaint. They said they provided her with redress of £25 for long holding times. CBS said they were unable to evidence an agreement with the branch that they wouldn't send personal details in the post. CBS said on 31 August 2022, they submitted a request to transfer her ISA with another provider to themselves, but this was rejected by them on 1 September 2022, however, they informed CBS that they had rejected it in error, so they submitted the request again on 2 September 2022 and this completed successfully on 8 September 2022.

CBS said there were times when they're required to send personal information in the post such as any application forms or documents relating to an ISA transfer, and if any of her details were wrong or didn't match what the other institute holds, the ISA transfer may be rejected. They said to stop any letters coming out to her it was agreed that they would put a block on post being sent to her, and Mrs W wanted this to be applied to her account. They said Mrs W called them on 14 December 2022, wanting to set up an ISA transfer. But this couldn't be done due to the block on her account which was preventing post from being sent. CBS said if they set up an ISA transfer they're required to send an ISA tax confirmation in the post. Mrs W brought her complaint to our service.

Our investigator felt the £25 offered was reasonable. He said CBS provided evidence which confirmed the other provider had incorrectly rejected the ISA transfer, CBS were unable to find any evidence of an agreement to not send letters after the first ISA transfer was requested. He said CBS did stop post as requested, but as some letters were required to be sent, then an ISA transfer couldn't be completed without such letters being sent.

Mrs W asked for an ombudsman to review her complaint. She said she doesn't feel the £25 compensation was enough to compensate her for her time and inconvenience of a 60 mile round trip to the branch and she made a number of calls which took a lot of time and £25 didn't cover this. She felt a minimum of £100 was acceptable.

## **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.

Mrs W has made a number of points to this service and I've considered and read everything she's said and sent us. But, in line with this service's role as a quick and informal body I'll be focusing on the crux of her complaint in deciding what's fair and reasonable here.

CBS have provided evidence that the third party ISA provider that Mrs W was transferring from had accidentally rejected the transfer request in error. So CBS submitted the transfer request again. As this error was made by the third party, I can't hold CBS responsible for any delays with this transfer.

I've noted the strength of feeling that Mrs W has about receiving letters in the post which contain her personal details. But CBS have explained that there are times when they are required to send personal information in the post to Mrs W, such as any application forms or documents relating to an ISA transfer. And they must ensure that all the information they hold is correct and up to date.

I've read what Mrs W has said about the conversation she had with the branch and there was an agreement to not send post. The staff member who opened Mrs W's account has provided a statement as part of Mrs W's complaint that she told Mrs W that she would receive letters from CBS with her details on them and an agreement had not been made with the branch. As I was not in the branch when Mrs W opened her account, I would be unable to evidence what was actually discussed here. As closed-circuit television (CCTV) would be unlikely to contain audio and would typically be only kept for a number of days (eg 30 days), I'm unable to say what was discussed here, and therefore I can't say that Mrs W was told incorrect information here.

I can see that from the notes CBS hold, they show Mrs W later told them that she visited the branch so she wouldn't receive post with her details on it. Although Mrs W has told us she had a 60 mile round trip to visit the branch, CBS would not be responsible for paying for her time or costs to travel to the branch.

I've considered what happened when Mrs W called CBS to ask them to not send any personal information to her through the post. CBS applied a hold code onto the account which stopped correspondence being sent to her. CBS' notes show that the person Mrs W spoke to confirmed that there wouldn't be any letters with personal details on them, but if she were to open an ISA she may receive some letters as they were mandatory. Several weeks after this, Mrs W attempted to open another fixed rate ISA with CBS and further letters were sent to her. So it does appear that Mrs W was informed if she opened a new ISA then letters would need to be sent to her for CBS to fulfil their regulatory requirements. And our service would be unable to interfere with how CBS fulfil their regulatory requirements.

Mrs W spoke to CBS on 14 December 2022 to request an ISA transfer from a third party to the fixed rate ISA she recently opened, however, CBS confirmed they could only process the transfer if they lifted the hold code. This is because their systems won't allow transfers on accounts which contain hold codes, as there are letters they have to send to customers to confirm ISA transfers. As this is CBS' process, it is not within this service's remit to tell a business how to run their processes or procedures. It would be the role of the regulator – the Financial Conduct Authority, who have the power to instruct CBS to make changes to their policies and procedures, if necessary.

I've considered what Mrs W has said about the level of compensation awarded to her. But £25 is in line with what we would expect a business to pay Mrs W based on the long hold times, which CBS does not dispute. It would not be proportionate for me to ask CBS to pay further compensation to Mrs W based on what happened here, so it follows I don't require CBS to do anything further.

**My final decision**

I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs W to accept or reject my decision before 8 August 2023.

Gregory Sloanes  
**Ombudsman**