

Cliff Weight
By email

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Dear Mr Weight

Thank you for your recent letter to Baroness Zahida Manzoor and Caroline Wayman about claims relating to Woodford. I'm a senior manager here at the service, and I oversee the area of casework that is dealing with these cases. Your query has been passed to me as I'm best placed to respond.

You have asked a series of questions, which I have answered below. Whilst, as you will appreciate, I am unable to provide some of detail that you are seeking, I have answered as fully as I can.

1. *How long will the FOS take to deal with these claims related to Woodford and Link?*

We are not able to provide a specific timescale for this. A number of related cases have already been resolved, and we are still investigating and considering others. Overall, we aim to provide a timely response to all of the cases we receive.

2. *How many claims related to Woodford and Link you have received so far?*

In total we've received 549 complaints concerning the issues with the WEIF fund.

3. *Please confirm the breakdown of claims between Woodford, Hargreaves Lansdowne and Link Fund Solutions.*

The majority of the complaints relate to Hargreaves Lansdowne, a smaller number relate to Link and few relate to Woodford Investment Management. In addition, we have some cases relating to IFAs.

4. *How long do you anticipate resolution of those claims will take*

We are not able to provide a specific timescale at this stage. A number of related cases have already been resolved, and we are still investigating and considering others. Overall, we aim to provide a timely response to all of the cases we receive.

5. *Have you implemented protocols for the review of the WEIF claims*

We have ring fenced all of these cases, and they are being investigated and considered by a dedicated team. We have prioritised cases using our normal procedure and any priority complaints will be dealt with first.

6. *How many claims have received a) an initial opinion only b) progressed to an ombudsman decision?*

A relatively small number of these cases have already been resolved: 19 have been resolved at view stage, 9 have been progressed to an ombudsman and 3 have received final decisions.

7. *When do you anticipate the first ombudsman decision to be published in respect of: a) Woodford b) Hargreaves c) Link*

As you will be aware, we publish anonymised versions of our final decisions. We are not able to provide a specific timescale for the publication of the decisions you mention. A number of related cases have already been resolved, and we are still investigating and considering others. Overall, we aim to provide a timely response to all of the cases we receive.

8. *How many of these claims you have completed so far?*

A relatively small number of these cases have already been resolved. 19 have been resolved at view stage, 9 have been progressed to an ombudsman and 3 have received final decisions.

9. *Will the FOS assess each claim on its merits?*

We will follow our usual approach to assessing these cases. Once we have established that we are able to help on an individual case, each case will be assessed on its merits.

10. *Will the FOS delay responding to claims until the legal claims currently being made/considered have been dealt with in court?*

As you will be aware we provide a free and informal alternative to the courts and consumers can choose to use our service as an alternative to legal action. We are not dependent on the outcome of legal claims and we generally would not delay an assessment.

As you set out in your letter consumers can face choices in how to pursue a complaint, whether through legal action or via our service. Clearly, there are a number of factors that will influence each consumers' decision including cost, timeliness and potential outcomes. I recognise that these can be difficult choices to make. Our service is intended to be free, informal and easy to access without the need for representation. We have a duty to resolve complaints based on what we think is fair and reasonable in all circumstances of the case.

Our assessments of these cases are continuing and as you will understand there are a number of complexities in dealing with complaints of this kind, so it is not possible to answer some of the questions you ask at this time.

I would be very pleased to meet to discuss these issues. Perhaps you could suggest some potential dates for a video call.

Yours sincerely



Garry Hunter
Ombudsman Leader