

complaint

Miss M is unhappy that Provident Personal Credit Limited (trading as Satsuma) didn't update her address for a number of years. More generally she is unhappy with the service she has received from Satsuma stretching back a number of years.

background

Satsuma, in their final response letter (FRL) of 18 September 2018, didn't uphold Miss M's complaint. It went on to explain that, in its opinion, some of the issues Miss M had complained about had been previously dealt with in 2014 and 2015.

However, it went on to say that, because it hadn't received any payments from StepChange (towards Miss M's outstanding balance) since June 2018, it sent a letter to Miss M on 11 August 2018, detailing the arrears on the account. It also went on to explain that it had updated Miss M's address and this occurred in September 2018.

Satsuma also offered to assist Miss M with a repayment plan in order to pay down her existing debt. Miss M doesn't appear to have accepted this offer, and has brought her complaint to our service.

One of our adjudicators looked at Miss M's complaint and concluded that it should be partially upheld. He explained some of the points that Miss M raised had previously been dealt with by Satsuma (for example the interest rate applied to the loan) in 2015, so he wasn't going to revisit those points.

However, he was in a position to consider Miss M's complaint about Satsuma not updating her address. The adjudicator was satisfied that an arrears notice and final response letter were sent to her father's address, these letters were opened, and has caused a breakdown in the relationship between Miss M and her family.

He acknowledged that Satsuma couldn't have foreseen that a member of Miss M's family would open the letters, but he was satisfied, based on the information he could see, that Satsuma had been told numerous times – and as far back as 2015 - that Miss M had moved. But it failed to update her address. So in order to put things right, he recommended a payment of £200.

Miss M appears to have accepted these findings. However, we didn't hear from Satsuma. So I don't know what it thinks we may have got wrong when looking at this complaint.

As no response was received, this case has been passed to me to issue a final 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.

To begin with, I just want to outline what we are and aren't able to consider. Satsuma, in its response to our service, has outlined that there have been previous complaints, and it has sent us copies of various final response letters it has issued.

The final response letter from 2014 is concerned with the impending cost cap that was introduced into the industry in 2015, which is not the subject matter of this complaint.

A further complaint was raised, and a FRL was issued on 14 April 2015. This seems to have dealt with a number of different concerns that Miss M had, including:

- the interest rate of the loans wasn't explained to her,
- delays in Satsuma responding to Miss M's emails and
- the setting up of a repayment plan and ways to make payments.

At no point, as far as I can see, had Satsuma dealt with the issue around Miss M's address, so it is this that I will address in this decision. I also understand, from the emails I have seen, that Miss M has said she shouldn't have been given these loans due to irresponsible lending, but I want to be clear, I make no finding in this final decision in relation to whether Satsuma was right or wrong to have provided her with her lending.

So, like the adjudicator, I think it's reasonable to consider what happened when Satsuma sent the arrears notice and the FRL to an incorrect address.

As mentioned above, Satsuma hasn't told us what, if anything, it thinks we may have not got right. So I've based my findings on the information and evidence that I have available.

Miss M has provided us copies of emails she sent to Satsuma and these emails showed she was regularly updating her address with it. Indeed, the first email is from December 2015. However, for some reason Satsuma doesn't appear to have updated her address at this time, or subsequent times when she requested her address be changed. It isn't clear why this wasn't done, and it seems that Satsuma only updated her address in September 2018.

Satsuma hasn't explained why it took so long to update her address when her requests were in my opinion clear and, as far as I can see, there was no reason not to follow Miss M's instructions. So, based on what I've seen, I'm satisfied that Satsuma made an error by not updating Miss M's address.

I then need to consider whether this error has led to Miss M being caused trouble and upset. We know that Satsuma sent an arrears notice and a FRL to an address that Miss M wasn't at, and at this point a family member opened the letters. Miss M has told us that this has led to a breakdown in her family relationships.

I, like the adjudicator, accept that Satsuma couldn't have foreseen that a member of Miss M's family would open the letters that it sent to the wrong address. Indeed, had the letters been sent to the correct address and then a third party had opened them, we wouldn't be able to say that Satsuma had done anything wrong.

However, there was a risk, given that Satsuma was sending post to the wrong address that something like this may have happened. And given I'm satisfied that an error has been made by not updating Miss M's address, it therefore follows that I'm satisfied that Miss M has been caused distress by what has happened. As a result, like the adjudicator, I will be making an award to Miss M for this.

I'm also aware that there is an outstanding balance on Miss M's loan. Satsuma has offered to discuss a repayment plan in order to clear what is owed and so Miss M may wish to discuss her options with Satsuma.

putting things right

The adjudicator awarded £200 for trouble and upset caused to Miss M as a result of the errors made by Satsuma. I don't consider this an unreasonable sum to reflect what has happened here. So Satsuma should:

- Pay Miss M £200 for the trouble and upset it has caused.

my final decision

My final decision is that I'm upholding Miss M's complaint.

Provident Personal Credit Limited should put things right for Miss M as set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss M to accept or reject my decision before 11 November 2019.

Robert Walker
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