

Unusual member interactions

➤ **Pensions Age** finds out times when a pension scheme member took you by surprise

We received a pensioner payslip, returned to us. We suspended the pension and sent a letter via DWP tracing service. A couple of weeks later we received a response from DWP to say the person was deceased. We obtained a copy of the death certificate and tried to contact the spouse, as stated on the death certificate. We used a tracing company and after a couple of months we were given a possible telephone number. I telephoned, expecting to speak to the spouse, only to discover it was the member and she was still alive. She had the same name and date of birth as the dead person.

Also, we got a phone call from another pensioner. She was receiving payments via cheque, she got married, and assumed she was no longer entitled to the pension, so stopped cashing the cheques. After seven years she telephoned to check if she was still eligible for the pension. She was and we had to make back payments!

Quantum Advisory senior pensions administrator, Hywel Davies

Before they became BlackRock, Barclays Global Investors (BGI) used to have a series of funds called 'aquila'.

When I was at Aquila (the software firm) I used to get all of the contacts made through our website.

Every time BGI's funds performed badly, I knew I would get a barrage of complaints and borderline abuse from members who must have just googled 'aquila pensions' and found us.

As you'd expect, I had a pretty standard set of words that I would send

back, guiding them towards their pension providers. That would work 99 per cent of the time.

The 1 per cent when it didn't work will stay with me forever. That member replied: "OK, sorry, but I don't really understand pensions. Could you speak to them for me and ask them to sort it out?" This whole BGI/aquila thing was so prevalent at one time that I even received a call querying something about the aquila series from someone at BGI!

Equiniti propositions and solutions director, Chris Connelly

If you have experience of working in member service then you'll know your job can sometimes be a mix of customer support, counsellor and agony aunt. We have members who regularly call the helplines just wanting to talk to someone. I've also heard of a particular member call up a helpline so that the team can listen to him play the piano, and a member who calls every day to get confirmation their pension will be paid as normal.

Trafalgar House client director, Daniel Taylor

We had one member who ticked all official paperwork relating to comms for 'mail only contact' – woe betide if you contacted them by accident if you



were new (as I once was) – this meant all email comms to board meetings, AGMS, had to be typed out as a letter.

We also generally experienced members moving home, not informing us and then ringing up to vent why they had not received correspondence. Quietly explaining that without notification we cannot predict where they would be was very therapeutic.

In contrast, we had a member who rang up every year on a certain day/date without fail to inform us that they were alive. Then one year, they were being held in a nursing home 'against their will' but wanted to inform us of their change of address.

Anon

➤ **Written by Laura Blows**