

The complaint

Mr Y is unhappy with the way Nationwide Building Society (Nationwide) handled an issue that arose whilst he was depositing a cheque via an ATM.

What happened

Mr Y was depositing a cheque to his current account using an ATM. When keying in the amount on the cheque, he mistakenly keyed in the wrong amount. The ATM asked him to verify the amount, but Mr Y says he just pressed yes without checking the amount he'd entered was correct. But when he looked at the printed receipt, he realised he'd made an error, so he notified a member of staff. Mr Y says he was told in branch that the error would be rectified that same day.

Mr Y checked his account the next day, and he noticed the incorrect amount was still there. He called Nationwide, who got in contact with the correct department. That department verified the error immediately, corrected it and advised that it would take 7-10 working days to refund the third party. At this point Mr Y said he'd wasted too much time with this, and he requested £25 compensation.

The handler at Nationwide raised a complaint for Mr Y. Nationwide investigated the complaint. It apologised for any inconvenience, but it didn't uphold the complaint.

So, Mr Y complained to our service. He said he wanted to claim £150 for the valuable time he'd wasted pursuing this. An investigator looked at the complaint. But the investigator said the Nationwide had already done enough to put things right for Mr Y.

Mr Y doesn't agree, and he's asked for an ombudsman to review the complaint.

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.

Having done so, I'm not upholding it. I'll explain why.

As a service we'll consider whether compensation is appropriate in each case. We'll ask about what happened, and the impact it had on a consumer's life. A business's mistake can affect a consumer practically or emotionally, as well as financially. For this reason, the rules we follow say that we can award fair compensation if a consumer experiences an inconvenience.

But we're all inconvenienced at times in our day-to-day lives – and a certain level of frustration and minor annoyance is expected. For us to make an award we'd need to see that the impact of a business's mistake was more than someone would expect to experience as part of everyday life. Using financial services won't always be totally hassle-free. So, just because there's been a mistake it doesn't necessarily follow that we would always award compensation for that mistake – especially when the impact of it is minimal.

In this specific instance, Mr Y had admitted he made the initial error. He didn't check the amount he keyed in at the ATM. He says he brought this to the attention of the bank, and he says he was told in branch that Nationwide would amend it that same day. However, when he checked the following day the issue hadn't been corrected in his account, so he called Nationwide immediately.

Nationwide says that it wouldn't have told Mr Y that his error would be rectified immediately. It says deposit issues following an ATM transaction are not the responsibility of the branch. It says deposit issues are referred to a specialist team, reconciled and amended within a few days.

The agent Mr Y spoke to when he called was very clear with her information. She put Mr Y on hold whilst she contacted the correct department. Mr Y was on hold for a very short period, and when she came back, she was clear that the issue had now been rectified and a refund would be due back to the cheque issuer in 7-10 days. Mr Y wasn't happy, and he immediately asked for compensation, so the handler offered to open a complaint for Mr Y.

Looking at the bank statement provided, I can see that the error that Mr Y made was actually recorded as corrected the day he made the call. Nationwide has also confirmed that the branch that Mr Y notified of the issue had also sent in a referral sheet about the deposit error, as per its process. I can see Mr Y's complaint was submitted, he was updated regularly, and he received a final response approximately two months later. I can't see any delays, or failures here.

I know Mr Y is upset about what he says he was told in the branch. He says as a professional having to take up so much time to sort this out means he is out of pocket and he now wants compensation of £150 for this time. He says if he hadn't called, this issue would never have been sorted.

But I don't agree. Nationwide has confirmed the referral sheet was sent from the branch. And it's unlikely it would've been received at head office before Mr Y called Nationwide the next day. It's hard to say what Mr Y was told in branch. I wasn't there to hear what was said and there are no witnesses. But given the correct process was followed by the branch in relation to deposit errors, I'd say it's more likely than not the correct process was explained to Mr Y, and Mr Y likely understood it incorrectly.

Mr Y made the initial error. He has admitted he didn't check the amount he entered at the ATM. This was his responsibility, not Nationwide's. And even if the procedure wasn't explained correctly to Mr Y in branch, the correct referral sheet was sent. When Mr Y called Nationwide the next day it rectified the issue immediately and told him the refund to the third party would be repaid in 7-10 days. So, Mr Y hasn't suffered financially, and he hasn't suffered much distress or inconvenience because of the actions of Nationwide. There's no evidence to suggest that Nationwide made any errors. In fact, Nationwide has taken time out of its day to rectify an error that Mr Y has made, and it apologised for any confusion caused when Mr Y visited the branch.

I know Mr Y wants compensation for what happened. I appreciate he felt distressed, and he feels there could've been issues going forward. But Mr Y was never going to be financially impacted by the rectification of the amount deposited, and in cases like this we wouldn't award compensation for what may or may not happen in the future. From what I can see, all of this had minimal impact on Mr Y, and I can see Nationwide dealt with it correctly. This is not a situation where we would ask Nationwide to pay compensation. As such I'm not upholding this complaint and I won't be asking Nationwide to do anything further.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr Y to accept or reject my decision before 5 April 2022.

Derek Dunne
Ombudsman