

The complaint

Mr and Mrs N complain about the service provided by Metro Bank PLC when they were trying to withdraw funds from their savings account.

What happened

Mr and Mrs N opened an 18-month fixed term deposit savings account in 2019.

In 2021, Mr N contacted Metro Bank to find out how he could transfer the money out of the account after it matured in June 2021. Over a series of phone calls, Mr N was given information which resulted in him making a trip to a Metro branch in the UK in June 2021 where he was told the withdrawal couldn't be made unless Mrs N was also present.

Metro considered Mr N and Mrs N's complaint. They agreed Mr N had been given some incorrect information and offered £100 in recognition of this.

Mr and Mrs N weren't happy with this and referred their complaint to our service. Our Investigator agreed Metro had provided incorrect information and recommended they pay £400 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience caused, along with £20 to cover the cost of Mr N's unnecessary trip to the branch.

Mr and Mrs N said they didn't agree with all of the Investigator's findings but were prepared to accept the Investigator's recommended redress. Metro didn't think anything further compensation was warranted but indicated they would be willing to increase their offer to £150.

As Metro Bank didn't agree, the complaint's been passed to me to decide.

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.

Metro Bank accepts that they did not give Mr N the correct information during the initial phone calls he had with them. Metro should've told Mr N when he first contacted them that there was restriction on the account and the only way to transfer the money out would be for both him and Mrs N to attend the branch.

When Mr and Mrs N first opened their account in 2019, they did so online. Metro told Mr N when the account was first opened both account holders needed to register and log in to internet banking. It seems Mr N had registered for internet banking but Mrs N did not. Because of this a restriction was placed on the account which meant transactions out of the account could only be carried out with both account holders present.

Mr and Mrs N were living abroad in June 2021. It's inevitable that attempting to conduct banking in the UK from abroad will be more expensive and inconvenient than it otherwise would be. Particularly because Mr and Mrs N did not have their internet banking security

information or did not have continuous access to the UK phone number they'd provided Metro Bank. So while I understand these factors exacerbated the problems Mr N experienced, I don't think I can fairly hold Metro responsible for these issues.

Mr N has told us that the trip he made to the UK in June was solely to deal with this issue relating to Metro Bank. However, he mentioned in the call on 21 June that he was "coming to the UK on business" the following week. So I'm not persuaded that the first trip made to the UK was solely for the purpose of dealing with the issue with Metro. So I don't agree Metro needs to cover the costs of Mr N's trip to the UK.

However, Mr N's trip to the branch required train travel from his home in the UK to another city, and I agree that this was unnecessary and caused by the incorrect information given by Metro. So I agree Metro should reimburse Mr N £20 and pay 8% interest on this.

Mr N said he has lost interest because he wasn't able to move the money until 4 August, when he and Mrs N were next due to be in the UK, more than a month after the account matured. As I've said, because of the restriction on the account, both Mr and Mrs N were required to attend a branch to make the withdrawal but Mr N told Metro in a phone call Mrs N wasn't able to travel – so it seems more likely than not that the earliest both of them could travel to the UK and visit the branch was 4 August. So I don't agree Metro need to cover the lost interest.

Nonetheless Mr N has been inconvenienced and distressed by the wrong information given by Metro, the unnecessary visit to the branch and poor handling of some of the calls with Metro. And I agree with our Investigator that £100 Metro already offered isn't sufficient, nor do I think their increased offer of £150 is enough.

Having considered all the circumstances of the case, I agree £400 fairly reflects the distress and inconvenience caused to Mr N. I say this because Mr N had to make a series of phone calls, during which incomplete or incorrect information was given. He was given assurances during some of the calls that later transpired to be untrue and was, understandably, frustrated as a result of Metro's communication. He had to take an unnecessary trip from his home in the UK to another city to visit the branch. I have also considered Mr N's concern was likely worsened by the amount of money in the account – more than £100,000 - since he was having trouble arranging for the money to be transferred.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I uphold Mr and Mrs N's complaint.

To put things right, I require Metro Bank PLC to:

- Pay Mr and Mrs N £400 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience caused.
- Pay Mr and Mrs N £20 to cover the cost of Mr N's travel to visit the branch in June 2021. Metro should also pay 8% simple interest per year on this amount from the date of the branch visit to the date it's paid.*

*If Metro considers that they're required by HM Revenue & Customs to deduct income tax from that interest, they should tell Mr and Mrs N how much they've taken off. They should also give Mr and Mrs N a tax deduction certificate if they ask for one.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr and Mrs N to accept or reject my decision before 26 August 2022.

Eleanor Rippengale
Ombudsman