

The complaint

Miss B complains about Lloyds Bank PLC (“Lloyds”) for charges applied to her account and the way she was treated when she attended a branch. She wants the charges to her account to be refunded, and compensation for her distress and inconvenience.

What happened

Miss B had an account with Lloyds between 2008 and 2014.

While her account was open, Miss B incurred charges for various issues.

Miss B suffered difficult personal circumstances and poor health while her account was open, and in the period following its closure.

Around the start of 2022, Miss B became aware that charges had been added to her account and she wanted to query these. She felt that they should be refunded to her.

She attended a branch in early March 2022. During her visit she was told that it would cost her £5 per statement to receive her old statements and that some of these statements were no longer kept. Miss B felt that the staff member she spoke to lacked empathy and was very unhelpful. She left the branch without access to her statements.

Miss B then returned to branch a few days later. She spoke to another member of staff and it was ultimately arranged that copy statements would be provided to her.

Miss B felt that she had been badly treated by the staff on her first visit, and this caused her to have to come back later.

Miss B complained to Lloyds. She queried the charges which had been applied to her account and complained that she had been unfairly treated and badly advised during her visit in branch.

Lloyds responded to her complaint. It did not uphold any complaint about charges due to the account having been closed for more than 6 years. It acknowledged that Miss B had been wrongly advised about her statements in branch and offered her £30 compensation to reflect this.

Miss B was not happy with this and contacted us.

Our investigator looked into this matter and upheld Miss B’s complaint. The investigator agreed with Lloyds that the complaint about charges was out of time for us to look at, but felt that Lloyds’ poor customer service during Miss B’s visit to branch had caused her significant distress and inconvenience. He therefore recommended that Lloyds increase its compensation to £100.

Miss B did not accept that view and thought that the compensation ought to be increased. The complaint has therefore been passed for an ombudsman decision.

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.

I understand Miss B has suffered considerable distress and inconvenience from this matter. She has explained the circumstances she experienced and how this affected her finances. To then realise that she was charged on her account would have been very upsetting. In addition, she has described how she felt in branch and that she did not feel that her dignity was respected.

I understand that, but I agree with my colleague's view regarding the level of compensation.

The investigator looked into whether there were exceptional reasons to look at Miss B's complaint about charges out of time and concluded that there were not exceptional reasons. I appreciate that Miss B has suffered a great deal over this time, but I agree that her reasons for not bringing a complaint sooner are not exceptional.

I therefore agree that I cannot consider the charges themselves.

I also agree with the investigator's view that Lloyds did not handle Miss B's visit to branch properly and this meant that Miss B had to return later and was upset by the interaction. I am pleased that statements were later provided to Miss B.

Without having been there it is difficult to assess the way the member of staff spoke to Miss B, but Lloyds has accepted that the information given was wrong. I also accept that Miss B has been very upset by this.

Miss B thinks that the level of compensation suggested by my colleague is too low. I understand her view, but I am satisfied that this level of compensation is reasonable in the circumstances and is in line with other awards we would make in similar circumstances.

Consequently, I agree with the investigator's assessment and uphold Miss B's complaint.

Putting things right

To put matters right, I agree that Lloyds should increase its offer of compensation to Miss B to £100. I understand that Miss B may be disappointed by this decision, but I hope it explains clearly my reasons for reaching it.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, I uphold Miss B's complaint and direct Lloyds Bank PLC to pay to Miss B £100 compensation for her distress and inconvenience.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss B to accept or reject my decision before 12 August 2022.

Laura Garvin-Smith
Ombudsman