

## **The complaint**

Miss G complains about HSBC UK Bank Plc (“HSBC”) deciding to close her accounts with it. She also complains about the customer service she received from HSBC.

## **What happened**

The circumstances of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I will not repeat them all again here in detail. But I will provide an overview of events below.

In late 2021, HSBC froze Miss G’s accounts with it. She contacted HSBC about this and when she believed the matter was resolved, she later received a letter from HSBC putting her notice that it would be closing her accounts. Miss G tried to dispute this to no avail, and so raised a complaint.

HSBC investigated the matter and said that, in line with its terms and conditions, it decided it would no longer be able to provide Miss G with banking services or products; and gave her two months’ notice that it would be closing her accounts and related services. HSBC also offered Miss G £75 compensation for customer service-related issues.

Unhappy with this, Miss G referred her complaint to our Service.

One of our investigators considered the complaint. She thought HSBC had not done anything wrong in its decision to close Miss G’s accounts. She also thought that the £75 compensation HSBC offered was fair.

As Miss G did not accept the investigator’s findings, the complaint has been passed to me to make a decision.

## **What I have 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 agree with the conclusions reached by the investigator for reasons I set out below.

But first, I would like to say at the outset that I have summarised this complaint in far less detail than the parties involved. I want to stress that no discourtesy is intended by this. If there is a submission I have not addressed, it is not because I have ignored the point. It is simply because my findings focus on what I consider to be the central issues in this complaint.

### *Closure of accounts*

Having considered the terms and conditions of Miss G’s accounts, I can see that they, amongst other things, permit HSBC to close such accounts provided it gives the customer concerned two months’ notice.



By letter dated 25 November 2021, HSBC put Miss G on notice that it would be closing her accounts on 28 January 2022. It seems to me therefore that HSBC correctly followed its terms and conditions. With that in mind, I am unable to say HSBC has done anything wrong in this regard.

I acknowledge Miss G says she has been a long-standing customer of HSBC. However, this is not a valid reason which would negate HSBC's decision – which it is entitled to make – to end its relationship with Miss G; a commercial decision which this Service cannot interfere with.

#### *Customer service*

I have considered the trouble and upset Miss G says she experienced when she discovered her accounts would be closed, which then led to the complaint she raised. I have weighed this against the procedure HSBC followed. Having done so, I am not persuaded HSBC acted unreasonably – for example, requesting Miss G attend a branch was a reasonable request given the circumstances.

I can see that there is some dispute about when Miss G raised her complaint with HSBC; and what it told her about payments on her credit card. Regarding the former, HSBC backdated the complaint date; and regarding the latter, I have seen no evidence to support this.

That said, HSBC has offered Miss G £75 compensation, which I think fairly reflects the above.

#### **My final decision**

HSBC UK Bank Plc has already made an offer to pay Miss G £75 compensation, which I think is fair in all the circumstances. Therefore, I direct HSBC UK Bank Plc to pay Miss G this amount if it has not done so already.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss G to accept or reject my decision before 6 October 2022.

Tony Massiah  
**Ombudsman**