

## **The complaint**

Mrs and Mr K complain that Paragon Bank Plc failed to help them access their savings.

## **What happened**

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I won't repeat them again here. The facts are not in dispute, so I'll focus on giving the reasons for my 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.

Having looked through everything, I agree with the outcome reached by our investigator for the same reasons. I will explain why.

When thinking about compensation and what is a fair amount for a business to pay, our service must take into account all of the consumer's individual circumstances and decide on what we believe to be a fair and reasonable outcome. In this case, Mrs and Mr K have explained that they wanted to access their funds before Christmas, one of the most financially stressful times of the year. While I agree that Paragon cannot be held responsible for postal strikes, I do feel they could have helped Mrs and Mr K access their money sooner.

When Mr K called Paragon on 12 December 2022, he was told there was no other option but to send the OTP in the post. Mr K said he also asked that if the OTP had to be sent by post, could it be sent by guaranteed delivery. Again he was told it couldn't, however I feel this was a very reasonable and sensible request given the strikes and the fact it was during the festive period.

In fact, Paragon did end up making an exception and they were able to override the usual process on 20 December. I believe this could have been done at the time Mr K first contacted them on 12 December 2022. While Paragon have said the call handler wouldn't have had the authority to do so, I believe they could have escalated the matter more quickly.

Paragon tried to call Mr K once to let him know he could access the funds but weren't able to speak to him and so left a voicemail saying they would try to call back within 30 minutes, and by the end of the day. They didn't do this and have admitted they could have done more to let Mr K know that he and Mrs K could access the funds before Christmas.

Because Paragon didn't do anything further to contact Mrs and Mr K, they were unaware that they had access to their funds until they received a letter in January 2023. Given the issue with the first OTP being delayed, I find it reasonable that Paragon should have assumed the letter wouldn't get to them before Christmas.

Because of this, I agree that £150 in total should be paid to cover the stress and inconvenience experienced. While I accept that postal strikes are out of Paragon's control, they still have a duty to act fairly and reasonably, and I don't think they did here.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint. Paragon Bank Plc should pay Mrs and Mr K a total of £150 compensation for the inconvenience caused.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs K and Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 15 June 2023.

Danielle Padden  
**Ombudsman**