

The complaint

Mr D complains about the way TSB Bank Plc handled his application for a current account.

What happened

In mid-February 2023 Mr D made an online application for a current account with TSB. The account was opened and he was due to switch his account from another business in mid-March. Before the switch took place TSB asked Mr D for further evidence of his identity and address. Mr D tried to use TSB's mobile banking app but it wouldn't accept the reference number he'd been given. And when he called TSB to ask for help, he was told to send his documents to an email address that wouldn't accept them. Mr D provided the information TSB had asked for but then received a message to say his application had expired, even though his account was active and the switch had taken place. He complained to TSB about the issues above and said he was also unhappy with the complicated process for raising a complaint.

TSB said it was confident it hadn't made a mistake. It said as Mr D's account had been opened, the application reference number was no longer applicable. And he would need to use his account number and sort code instead. It said the email address it had given him included a secure link he could use to provide his identity documents. And it thought its complaint page provided clear information about how to raise a complaint. Mr D wasn't happy with this response so complained to this service.

Our investigator thought TSB needed to do more to put things right. She thought it was reasonable for TSB to ask Mr D to provide more evidence to verify his bank account. But she didn't think it had made it clear to Mr D how to log in to his account. And hadn't made it clear that the email address it provided included a link he'd need to follow to upload his documents. She thought TSB should pay Mr D £50 for the inconvenience caused. She too didn't think TSB's complaint page was hard to find.

TSB accepted the investigator's recommendation. But Mr D thought the compensation was too low. As Mr D didn't agree with the investigator's view, his complaint was passed to me to make a final decision. I came to a slightly different conclusion to our investigator, so I sent a provisional decision to Mr D and TSB to give them an opportunity to comment. Both parties said they had nothing further to add. So, my findings and my decision below are substantially the same as set out in my provisional 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 can understand Mr D's concern and confusion when TSB asked for more information to verify his account even though his application had already been approved and it was in the process of switching his account from another business. But TSB is entitled to do this, and the terms and conditions of Mr D's account sets out when it might need to check its customers' identification. So, I don't think it was unfair of TSB to ask Mr D for further proof of

his identity and his address when it did.

But I agree with our investigator that the way TSB asked for that information was unclear and confusing. The email it sent to Mr D asked him to use its banking app to upload evidence to confirm his identity. And once he logged in, it said he would need to select 'ID Check' and then enter his application reference number. Mr D said he tried entering his application reference number several times but it was not accepted and showed as not valid. TSB subsequently said his application reference number was no longer applicable at this point because his account had been opened. So, I don't see why it asked him to use it.

The result of this confusion was that Mr D had to call TSB and ask for help. I've listened to this call and while the call handler was helpful and explained why it would sometimes need further information to verify an account, they didn't clearly explain what would happen next. They gave Mr D an email address so he could send TSB his documents. But they didn't say he would get an automated response containing a secure link to use to upload his documents. I can understand why Mr D found this frustrating and inconvenient, causing him to spend more time on a matter that should have been straightforward.

Mr D was also unhappy with the time it took to register a complaint. TSB said it wasn't clear why it took him so long to do this and explained how it helps its customers to raise complaints. And, on balance, I think its response to this part of Mr D's complaint is fair. Its website says the easiest way of making a complaint is to use its banking app. But it does give other options, including completing an online complaint form and I don't think that is particularly difficult to find.

Putting things right

Our investigator thought TSB should pay Mr D £50 for the inconvenience caused by TSB's poor service. Mr D didn't think that was quite enough and, on balance, I agree. He said he was caused significant inconvenience and worry when TSB asked for further evidence to verify his account. And while TSB was justified in asking for that evidence, I can understand his confusion and his frustration when he wasn't able to follow the instructions he'd been given in an email and then by one of its call handlers. Mr D said that this was compounded by the message he received soon after his account had been switched, which said his account application had expired. I think an amount of £150 would be more appropriate for the level of inconvenience caused.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, my final decision is that TSB Bank Plc should pay Mr D £150 for the inconvenience caused by its poor service.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D to accept or reject my decision before 11 September 2023.

Richard Walker
Ombudsman