

The complaint

Mr P complains that National Westminster Bank Plc closed his account, and he'd like to know the reason why.

What happened

On 2 February 2023 NatWest sent Mr P a letter letting him know that his accounts would close in 60 days' time, on 3 April 2023.

Mr P complained to NatWest about their decision to close his accounts. NatWest thought they'd acted within the terms and conditions when closing his account. But, after Mr P's request they gave him an added month to make new banking arrangements.

One of our Investigators looked into Mr P's complaint. On reviewing Mr P's complaint they thought NatWest had acted fairly, and followed the terms and conditions of his account when closing it.

Mr P didn't agree. He highlighted that NatWest wouldn't share their reason with him, and it was unfair they'd decided to close his accounts when he'd been a customer for several years and always paid his liabilities. Mr P also highlighted that he had to chase NatWest to provide information to our service. And he thinks he should be paid £1,000 compensation for this.

As Mr P didn't agree it's been passed to me for a 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.

NatWest made its submission in confidence. Our rules allow this; it's then for me to decide whether it's fair to rely on evidence that only one party has seen. It's not a one-sided rule; either party to a complaint can submit evidence in confidence if they wish to, and we'll then decide if it's fair to rely on it.

Here, the information (and its source) is sensitive and on balance I don't believe it should be disclosed. But it's also clearly material to the issue of whether NatWest has treated Mr P fairly. So I'm persuaded I should take it into account when deciding the outcome of the complaint.

NatWest can only close accounts in certain circumstances and if it's in the terms and conditions of the account. NatWest have relied on the terms and conditions when closing Mr P's account. The terms explain that the bank can close an account with notice. I've considered the full circumstances of this complaint, and considered all relevant evidence, and I agree NatWest were entitled to close Mr P's account. I'm pleased to see that NatWest initially gave Mr P the full notice period, then they extended this further on his request. I wouldn't expect them to do anything further here.

I understand that Mr P would like to understand NatWest's reasons for closing his account – and he believes it might be because he was identified as a Political Exposed Person (PEP). As our Investigator outlined, NatWest aren't under any obligation to share their reasons for closing Mr P's account and therefore I can't say they need to share anything further with him about this. I'd like to try to reassure Mr P that from the reasoning and evidence shared with me by NatWest I'm satisfied their actions were fair, in line with relevant regulations and the terms and conditions of the account.

Mr P's requested compensation for the effort he went to chasing NatWest to provide information to our service about his complaint. I'm afraid I can't award him compensation here – I say this as firstly complaint handling isn't a regulated activity, therefore it isn't something our service has the powers to comment on. Secondly, I can't fairly conclude Mr P *had* to chase NatWest. I appreciate he was frustrated by their failure to respond to our service, but the lack of information provided from NatWest was something our service was addressing.

I understand Mr P will be disappointed by my conclusions, but I won't be asking NatWest to do anything further here.

My final decision

My final decision is I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr P to accept or reject my decision before 4 March 2024.

Jeff Burch
Ombudsman