

The complaint

Ms A complains that MBNA Limited's online services don't show her correct 'after pending' balance.

What happened

Ms A says that MBNA updated its systems and now her online balances specifically her 'after pending' balances aren't correct. She says that this is a particular issue with pending credit transactions where some are included, and others aren't. She has spent time trying to reconcile her balance with her transactions and trying to understand the discrepancies. Ms A also complains that she wasn't provided with correct information when she contacted MBNA through its chat facility.

MBNA issued a final response letter dated 31 July 2023. It apologised for the time Ms A spent on its chat and on calls and the time she had taken to work out her correct balance. Because of the inconvenience this caused it arranged to pay her £75 and said feedback about the issues raised would be provided. MBNA sent Ms A a further letter dated 15 August 2023, providing further information about how pending transactions are recorded and it confirmed that its systems were working as designed.

Ms A wasn't satisfied with MBNA's response and referred her complaint to this service.

Our investigator said that MBNA had explained that whilst the pending refunds are shown in the transaction list in the app they aren't included in the balance until the refunds are received as available funds from the retailer. She said that MBNA was entitled to make commercial decisions about how it operates its online services, and our role is to review whether MBNA has acted fairly and reasonably. In this case she noted that Ms A was told she should receive pop-up messages to say that items marked 'CR' would be added once the credit had been received but Ms A said she didn't receive these and MBNA acknowledged that this pop-up might not have appeared. Our investigator didn't think this part of Ms A's complaint had been considered in MBNA's compensation and recommended that it pay her an additional £50 (bringing the total compensation to £125).

MBNA accepted our investigator's recommendation. Ms A didn't think the compensation recommended fairly recognised the continued issues she was experiencing.

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 how frustrating Ms A has found the issue with how MBNA displays her pending transactions and balances. But, as our investigator has explained, it isn't our role to say how MBNA should manage its commercial operations but instead to consider whether it has done anything wrong and whether its actions have resulted in Ms A being treated unfairly.

In this case, I can understand why Ms A has found the situation with her transactions

confusing. She has explained that certain refunds have been recorded in her pending transactions but not in the balance after pending. She raised this with MBNA, and it has explained that pending transactions and debits are usually reflected immediately in the account balance. However, as MBNA cannot guarantee that a third-party credit will deposit into the account, whilst this will show as pending it will not be reflected in the balance until the credit has cleared.

While I appreciate that Ms A doesn't agree with the approach taken by MBNA, as it has provided an explanation and the reason for its approach, I find it has responded in a reasonable way to Ms A's concerns. As MBNA has also confirmed that its systems are working regarding Ms A's account, I do not find I have evidence to say that she hasn't been treated fairly or that MBNA has done anything wrong in regard to the recording of the transactions.

That said, Ms A has spent time trying to understand the approach taken by MBNA and trying to reconcile her account. MBNA acknowledged this in its final response letter and arranged to pay Ms A £75 to reflect the inconvenience she had been caused and said that her feedback would be passed on. I do not find the initial compensation provided unreasonable, but I agree with our investigator that this doesn't take into account the upset Ms A was caused by being told she would have received 'pop-up' messages about the credit transactions when she didn't. I think that had Ms A received pop-up messages setting out that transactions marked 'CR' would be added once the credit had been received from the retailer this would have helped her to understand the timing of when refunds would be added to her balance and reduced the time she had to spend trying to reconcile her account. Taking this into account I agree with our investigator that MBNA should pay an additional £50 compensation.

I understand that Ms A doesn't think the suggested redress is sufficient. But, in this case, the compensation is for the time Ms A spent trying to reconcile her account and understand MBNA's approach as well as raising her concerns about this. Taking this into account alongside the explanation that MBNA has provided about how it deals with the pending credits I find that the compensation recommended in response to this complaint is reasonable.

Putting things right

MBNA Limited should, as it has agreed, pay Ms A an additional £50 (bringing total compensation to £125) for the inconvenience she has been caused while trying to reconcile her balances.

My final decision

My final decision is that MBNA Limited should take the action set out above in resolution of this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms A to accept or reject my decision before 18 March 2024.

Jane Archer
Ombudsman