

## **The complaint**

Mr D is unhappy that Bank of Scotland plc (“BOS”) declined a transaction on his credit card. He’s also unhappy that the bank wanted to speak to him to verify the transaction rather than send a text message.

## **What happened**

In June 2023 Mr D tried to make a purchase from a merchant for £2,786 using his BOS credit card. The transaction was declined, and Mr D’s card was blocked.

Mr D called to BOS. BOS advised Mr D that he would need to speak to the credit card fraud department to have the card unblocked but Mr D wasn’t happy to do this. Mr D said that whenever he made transactions with other banks, he received a verification text to confirm that the transaction was made by him. He complained to BOS.

BOS didn’t uphold the complaint. It said it had fraud measures in place to keep the account secure and that if it had any doubt about the spending, it would automatically decline the transaction to minimise the risk that the card may be being used by someone else. BOS also said it had spoken with the fraud department who had advised that because this was a high value transaction, they would need to speak to Mr D before the block could be removed.

Mr D remained unhappy and brought his complaint to this service.

Our investigator didn’t uphold the complaint. He said he hadn’t seen any evidence to suggest that BOS had made an error by blocking the card, and said he was satisfied that BOS had acted in line with the terms and conditions of the account, and in accordance with its internal processes.

Mr D didn’t agree. He said he wanted to know why he’d been able to use his debit card for the same transaction straight after the transaction on his credit card had been declined with no fraud checks whatsoever. He said that all other banks sent him a text when it was necessary to verify a transaction.

## **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’ve reviewed the terms and conditions of the account. These says that BOS can cancel or suspend the use of the card or refuse to authorise a transaction if they consider it necessary to protect the security of the account, or if they have reasonable grounds to suspect fraudulent or unauthorised use of the account, including if the transaction seems unusual compared with normal card usage.

I’ve looked at the history of the account for the three months prior to the attempted transaction. Based on what I’ve seen, the account wasn’t used very much by Mr D. The credit limit was £2800. The transaction that was attempted by Mr D in June 2023 was for

£2,786, which was an unusually high value transaction for Mr D to make and which would be used 90% of the credit limit on the account.

BOS has explained that it has fraud measures in place which compare individual cardholder transactions and retailer information with normal spending, so that potentially fraudulent transactions on the account can be identified.

In this case, the high value of the transaction, the unusual spend and the use of 90% of the credit limit on the account meant that the fraud measures identified this as a potentially fraudulent transaction and automatically declined the transaction.

It's clear that Mr D feels very strongly about this. He's said that other banks send him a verification text when they need to check that a transaction can be authorised. BOS has explained that on certain occasions it does send verification text messages to customers, but that in this case, as this was a high value transaction, unusual spend and using 90% of the credit limit, it wasn't suitable for text message verification and required Mr D to speak to the fraud department.

I appreciate that this has caused significant frustration to Mr D. However, I'm unable to say that BOS made an error when it blocked the card, because it was acting in line with the terms and conditions of the account, which Mr D agreed to when he took out the card.

I'm aware that Mr D has also complained that he was able to use his debit card to complete the same transaction without any issues. I'll be looking at that under a separate complaint and in a different decision.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is that I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D to accept or reject my decision before 7 May 2024.

Emma Davy  
**Ombudsman**