

The complaint

Miss B complains that West Bromwich Building Society unfairly closed her accounts and won't give her a reason why. She'd like her accounts reinstated.

What happened

Miss B held a few savings accounts with the West Brom. But in July 2023 they wrote to her to tell her they'd be closing her accounts in 30 days. They asked her to withdraw her funds and make alternative banking arrangements. Miss B went to branch several days later to close her accounts. But she wasn't happy with the service she received and didn't receive an explanation for the closure and raised a complaint.

West Brom responded to say that they had acted in line with the terms and conditions of her account. They said they had conducted a review before closing the account, but they weren't under any obligation to explain why. They said there wasn't an intention to cause Miss B any distress, and they felt they had dealt with her in the branch appropriately.

Miss B was not satisfied with this answer, so referred her complaint to our service. One of our investigators looked into what happened but didn't think the West Brom had done anything wrong. But Miss B disagreed, so the complaint has been passed to me to decide.

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.

Generally, it's up to financial businesses who they do, and don't, provide accounts. They have their own commercial discretion around this, and this can mean that on occasion they can choose to end the relationship with their customers. There's no specific obligation on them to explain why they've reached this decision. If this happens, like in Miss B's case, then our service can look in to whether they have been fair and reasonable in doing so, and done it in line with the agreed terms of the account.

The terms of Miss B's account with the West Brom allow them to close account for any reason, so long as they provide 30 days' notice. I've also seen the notice sent to Miss B, which gives the required notice. And I can see Miss B withdrew her funds and closed the accounts before the end of the period, so I'm satisfied this notice was received and understood. So, the account closure was carried out in line with the terms.

I appreciate Miss B would like to know more about why this decision was made. But the West Brom have declined to explain, and as mentioned above they don't have to give her any more details. Our service's rules allow us to receive certain evidence in confidence, and I'm satisfied that this applies to their reasoning. Having considered everything, I can't see that the decision to close Miss B's accounts was irrational or unreasonable. I'm satisfied this was a legitimate commercial decision that they are allowed to make.

Miss B will find this disappointing, but I haven't seen anything to suggest the West Brom

have treated her unfairly or unreasonably. As such I'm not asking them to do anything more.

My final decision

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss B to accept or reject my decision before 7 March 2024.

Thom Bennett
Ombudsman