

The complaint

Mr S complains that National Westminster Bank Plc ('NatWest') should stop sending email statement notifications and paper statements to him.

What happened

The details of this complaint are known to both parties, so I have just provided a brief overview of key events here.

Mr S had several bank accounts with NatWest. He said he managed his accounts online and didn't want to receive email notifications about statements. Mr S complained to NatWest.

NatWest responded and told Mr S that it changed his statement preference to paper. It said Mr S would either need to receive paper statements or email alerts, as per its own policies. NatWest said it paid £60 into Mr S's account as a gesture of goodwill for the distress and inconvenience this matter caused.

Mr S remained unhappy and so brought his complaint to this Service. He said he didn't want to receive statements in the post either. Mr S said he was concerned about security risks in relation to hacking and incorrectly delivered post.

Our Investigator said it was part of NatWest's policy to ensure statements were sent at least once a year. She thought NatWest should have arranged for the statements to be sent annually when Mr S first contacted it but felt the £60 already offered was a fair and reasonable recognition of any distress and inconvenience caused.

NatWest agreed to amend the frequency of the statements.

Mr S said he broadly agreed with the outcome but thought the compensation was not enough, given the time and effort he'd spent on the matter with NatWest. He thought a more realistic figure was £500. He felt an award of £60 didn't encourage NatWest to focus more sharply on solutions, without matters needing to be referred to this Service.

Our Investigator didn't change her assessment that £60 compensation was fair.

As Mr S didn't agree with what our Investigator said, this came 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.

As all parties are agreed that statements should be provided annually, the only issue I've now got to consider is whether £60 is a fair amount of compensation, given the particular circumstances of this complaint.

I know that Mr S is keen for the amount awarded to be increased so that NatWest is encouraged to deal with future complaints more effectively. But this Service doesn't have the authority to fine or otherwise penalise businesses when errors are made. That's the role of the regulator – the Financial Conduct Authority. So what I need to consider here is the level of distress and inconvenience this matter has caused Mr S.

I know that Mr S has said that receiving emails has been somewhat of a distraction from his work, but I don't think this is likely to have caused sufficient distress that it warrants monetary compensation. I see this as a minor inconvenience of everyday life. I can, however, see that this matter was unnecessarily inconvenient, as NatWest should have offered to send the statements annually when Mr S first contacted it. And I agree with what our Investigator said, namely that £60 compensation is fair and reasonable recognition of the inconvenience caused here.

I know my decision will disappoint Mr S, but I am not asking NatWest to increase the compensation offered. The only action it needs to take is to ensure that statements, in whatever form is preferred by Mr S, are produced annually.

My final decision

I require National Westminster Bank Plc to ensure statements are produced annually for Mr S and to pay the £60 compensation offered, if it has not already done so.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 28 April 2024.

Martina Ryan
Ombudsman