

The complaint

Mr K complains about the service provided by Metro Bank PLC ("Metro") regarding the transfer of two ISA's he held with it to another provider.

What happened

On 10 August 2023 Mr K instructed another ISA provider ("X") to transfer two of his ISA's held with Metro to it. This was actioned and the transfer request sent by X on 4 September but Metro has no record of receiving it.

After not receiving confirmation of the transfer Mr K chased this up with X and was advised that Metro hadn't responded to his request. Mr K complained to Metro about this. Metro says it received an email chasing the transfer on 20 September at which point the request was logged and an acknowledgement sent to X.

Metro noticed there was a name mismatch with the request as it held a longer version Mr K's name recorded on its system which is how it appeared on his passport when his account was opened with it in 2014.

Due to the name mismatch Metro couldn't proceed with the ISA transfer and wrote to X and Mr K on 25 September advising of this. To resolve the issue Mr K's name needed to be changed on its systems or on the transfer request. This was confirmed to Mr K in Metro's response to his complaint on 11 October 2023 where Metro didn't uphold Mr K's complaint as it hadn't detected any errors on its part.

Mr K's representative then raised a complaint on Mr K's behalf on 26 October about the service received regarding the ISA transfer. They say they made three separate calls where they were cut off, weren't called back and told there was a restriction on Mr K's account which meant they had to go into branch to reset Mr K's details to log a complaint.

Metro agreed its service was below its usual standard and awarded £75 compensation for the inconvenience.

A further complaint was raised on 1 November with Metro as a cheque for £20,632.91 it had sent to X couldn't be processed because of a payee mismatch. This caused some distress and confusion as Mr K didn't know where his money was if it hadn't been transferred to the new ISA provider. Following investigation Metro found this was due to the cheque being issued for the wrong amount, hadn't been dual signed and contained spelling errors in Mr K's name. It also accepted that it had again failed to provide call backs as promised and provided inconsistent information.

Metro upheld Mr K's complaint and issued a final response on 9 November. To put things right it compensated Mr K £450 consisting of £250 for the poor service received and £200 for any lost interest over the month of October. Metro has also confirmed that Mr K's funds have now been received by X.

Mr K was dissatisfied with this response. He wants to be compensated by Metro for the delay suffered, lost interest and the distress and inconvenience caused and so brought his complaint to this service.

One of our investigators looked into Mr K's concerns and reached the conclusion that the as ISA regulations require names to match exactly with both providers before an ISA transfer can be completed Metro hadn't done anything wrong here. They agreed that there were some shortfalls with Metro's service but thought the compensation already paid by Metro was a fair way to settle Mr K's complaint and in-line with what we'd recommend.

Mr K disagreed and has asked for an ombudsman's 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.

I hope that Mr K won't take it as a discourtesy that I've condensed his complaint in the way that I have. Ours is an informal dispute resolution service, and I've concentrated on what I consider to be the crux of the complaint. Our rules allow me to do that. I've outlined in the background what I believe to be an accurate reflection of the circumstances surrounding Mr K's complaint based on the evidence provided by both party's.

It might help if I explain here my role is to look at problems that Mr K has experienced and see if Metro has made a mistake or done something wrong. If it has, we seek to put - if possible – Mr K back in the position he would've been in if the mistakes hadn't happened. And we may award compensation that we think is fair and reasonable.

Metro don't agree that the initial delay to the ISA transfer was due to any error on its part but agreed it had failed to provide Mr K with the standard of customer service it expects.

And having considered all the evidence I agree that I don't think the initial delay in the ISA transfer was due to any error on Metro's part. From the information I have its not clear why Metro didn't receive the transfer request, but given its prompt response in processing the transfer following the chaser email received on 20 September, I'm satisfied this was the first Metro knew about it. So I don't think the delay here is due to an error on Metro's part.

I also don't think the reason Metro wasn't able to action the transfer at this point was due to any error or mistake on its part. Under ISA regulations names must match exactly with both providers before a transfer can be completed. Metro have shown that the names didn't match and that its records correctly recorded Mr K's name as shown in his passport provided to it when he opened his account. So I don't think Metro made an error here when it declined to action the transfer request and advised Mr K in writing on this on 25 September.

But I agree from this point – as does Metro – it failed to provide Mr K with an acceptable standard of customer service which led to further delays in the transfer of his two ISA's. It failed to return calls, provided inconsistent information and made errors in issuing a cheque to Mr K's new ISA provider.

This resulted in Mr K and his representative being inconvenienced by having to make numerous calls and branch visits to sort out the problem. And Mr K was understandably distressed when he didn't know what had happened to his funds.

To put things right Metro has already compensated Mr K £200 in lost interest for the month of October and a total of £325 for the distress and inconvenience caused. So the question I

have to answer is is this a fair way to settle Mr K's complaint. And I think it is. I understand the transfer has now been successfully completed and by compensating Mr K for the interest lost due to the delay I think he has been put back in the position he would've been in if the mistakes hadn't happened.

I appreciate the distress and inconvenience Mr K suffered during the course of this – but I think the total £325 compensation already paid is a fair amount for this and I'm not persuaded anymore compensation is warranted. So on this basis I don't think Metro needs to do anything more.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I've decided that the compensation already paid by Metro Bank PLC to Mr K is a fair way to settle this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 3 April 2024.

Caroline Davies
Ombudsman