

The complaint

Mr H complains about issues he faced when trying to make a payment from a joint account he holds with TSB Bank plc. This account is held with another party who I'll refer to as 'N'.

What happened

In May 2023, Mr H had an appointment with a solicitor who was helping him making payments to the Home Office. When Mr H tried to make a payment from an account with TSB, it was blocked. He called TSB to confirm that this was a genuine transaction and had to make several calls before he was assured that the block on the payment had been removed. But when he then went to make the payment – it was declined again.

Eventually he was able to successfully make the payment. But Mr H was unhappy about this experience. He complained to TSB, which offered him £100 for his inconvenience, but explained that it hadn't made an error in carrying out further checks on these payments. Mr H didn't feel this resolved things fairly – he said he was charged £300 + VAT by the solicitor, along with £50 for wasting their time. He also thought it was unfair that the solicitor has lost their own time and work as a result of this.

Mr H brought his complaint to this service where one of our investigators looked into it. They felt that TSB had acted fairly and in line with its obligations under regulations in blocking and asking for further information about the payment here. This included the second time that Mr H tried to make it too – which was because TSB needed to perform a higher level check on the payment. They said that the £100 was fair for the inconvenience caused here though and that without any further evidence of the costs Mr H says he incurred, they didn't think TSB needed to do any more here.

Mr H disagreed, saying that the £100 is an insult. He asked whether the investigator had listened to all the calls he had to make to resolve this problem. He said that the solicitor doesn't want to get involved in this complaint and that the experience has left him with anxiety and depression.

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.

The starting point here is that, as our investigator has said, TSB is entitled to perform further checks and ask questions around transactions before immediately making them. That's confirmed in the terms and conditions for Mr H's account which explain that there are circumstances where TSB may do this. Here, TSB has explained to this service why it flagged the payments in question for further checks. That information is sensitive to TSB, so I can't disclose it to Mr H. But having considered what TSB has said and the reasons it's given, I'm satisfied that it was entitled to carry out checks before it made the payments here.

TSB has explained that there are some circumstances where a payment will still be flagged for further checks, even if it has already passed some initial checks. That's what happened

to the payment Mr H wanted to make here. TSB is entitled to perform these additional checks and I'm satisfied it did so fairly here.

The problem was around the service Mr H received and what he was told. I've listened to the calls he had with TSB and he was very clearly assured that the payment would go through after completing the first set of questions he was asked. I don't think that was helpful, because that raised Mr H's expectations and he felt that the problem was resolved when, in fact, it wasn't. I realise TSB may not necessarily always tell customers about this second level of checks – but not doing so in the circumstances here meant that Mr H was further confused and frustrated when the payment didn't go through again, despite TSB's reassurances.

I'd also add that during the calls, Mr H was provided with some unclear and confusing advice around whether there was a block on the payment and the reasons the payment may not have been made. So while I'm satisfied that TSB was entitled to carry out the checks here, both on the first and second occasion, I think the service it provided Mr H was confusing and frustrating for him. It's only fair that TSB compensates him for this.

TSB has done that – offering £100 for the impact this had. While Mr H doesn't think that's enough – I think it's a fair amount that takes into consideration the time he spent on the phone to TSB resolving this and the fact that the issue was ultimately resolved on the same day.

Mr H has referred to incurring additional costs from his solicitor who was involved in the payments – but there is no evidence of this. Mr H has said they don't want to be involved in the complaint. So while I've considered what he has said about the impact here – without any further evidence to support the losses Mr H has referred to, I think £100 is fair. So it's this that TSB should now pay him.

My final decision

TSB Bank plc should pay Mr H the £100 it's already offered to resolve his complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H and N to accept or reject my decision before 19 April 2024.

James Staples
Ombudsman