

The complaint

Mr M complains due to an issue with his HSBC UK Bank plc (HSBC) online banking platform he was unable to transfer funds into an investment with another provider.

What happened

Mr M says in mid-September 2023 he was experiencing issues with his HSBC online banking secure keypad (SKP), which he needed so he could arrange a transfer for an investment with another provider. Mr M says despite being sent a new SKP and a separate activation code which took around 10 days to receive, he was still unable to log into his online bank account and had to request a new activation code.

Mr M says he held £20,000 in cash at home which he needed to deposit to his bank account to initiate the transfer for the new investment, but due to delays at the branch counter he couldn't complete the cash deposits and the only alternative provided by HSBC to help him, was to drive quite some distance to deposit the monies at another branch.

Mr M says he was due to take a prebooked holiday at the beginning of October 2023 and by the time he got back, while HSBC had provided him with a new activation code the investment opportunity was no longer available. Mr M says HSBC should recompense him for the fact he lost the opportunity to undertake the investment and doesn't feel the level of redress it has paid him of £200 goes far enough.

HSBC acknowledged that its staff could have provided better assistance when Mr M called them when he was experiencing issues with his SKP and paid him £200 for the inconvenience caused. HSBC says despite this, Mr M still needed to deposit the cash into his bank account to initiate the investment and he was given the option to either pay in small amounts at his local branch or visit a larger branch some miles away. HSBC says Mr M became frustrated over the process after paying in approximately £13,000, decided not to continue with the deposit - which was his decision and not the fault of HSBC.

Mr M wasn't happy with HSBC's response and referred the matter to this service.

The investigator looked at all the available information but didn't uphold the complaint. The investigator agreed HSBC took longer than needed to resolve the issue with Mr M's access to his online banking but felt the £200 it paid him for that was fair.

The investigator says while he could understand it would have been frustrating for Mr M to miss out on an investment opportunity, he didn't have the funds available in his bank account to carry out the investment. The investigator says this was because Mr M decided, due to the length of time it was taking to make the cash deposit at the branch, not to continue to pay the full £20,000 into his account and he couldn't hold HSBC responsible for that.

Mr M didn't agree with the investigator's view and asked for the matter to be referred to an ombudsman for a final 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.

Having done so, I won't be upholding this complaint and I will explain how I have come to my decision.

I can understand it would have been frustrating for Mr M not to be able to access his online banking account due to the issues he had with his SKP. When looking at this complaint I will consider if HSBC were responsible for the fact Mr M lost out on investing funds with another provider solely due to this issue.

Both parties have provided this service with comprehensive details of the course of events here and while that has proved helpful, I won't be commenting on every point that has been made as I don't feel it's necessary in order to come to a full and impartial decision here. That's not to say I haven't considered everything – I have.

Mr M's complaint centres around the fact due to the issue he faced in getting access to his online banking he wasn't able to undertake an investment of £20,000 with another provider. While I understand the points Mr M makes here and without trying to minimise the frustration this matter caused, I'm not fully persuaded by his argument.

From the information available I can see when Mr M raised his concerns regarding his SKP, although HSBC by its own admission could have dealt with the activation sooner than it did, it did provide the new SKP and activation codes and paid Mr M £200 for the inconvenience caused.

That said, I can't say this was the sole reason why Mr M wasn't able to undertake the investment he intended with another provider. Mr M held cash of £20,000 and this would have needed to be deposited into his account before the investment could have been made. But here, due to the time it was taking to make the deposit at a local HSBC branch, Mr M made the decision due to his frustration, after only depositing part of these monies not to continue with the deposit or to take the advice of HSBC to visit a larger branch counter - albeit some distance away.

So, it's fair to say without those monies being deposited Mr M wouldn't have been able to make the investment. Additionally, I understand HSBC did send the new activation code on 29 September 2023 and that would have allowed Mr M to log into his bank account, but its arrival coincided with Mr M being away on holiday at that time and by the time he returned on 12 October the investment offer had been withdrawn a few days earlier.

So, while I understand Mr M's frustration, I can't hold HSBC responsible for the fact he chose not to deposit the cash into his bank account or for the fact the new activation code arrived while he was away on holiday.

On balance while Mr M will be disappointed with my decision, I am satisfied HSBC's offer of £200 for the initial issue he faced was reasonable in the circumstances and I won't be asking anymore of HSBC here.

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 Mr M to accept or

reject my decision before 29 March 2024.

Barry White
Ombudsman