

The complaint

Mr W complains about the service he received from HSBC UK Bank Plc trading as First Direct bank.

What happened

In January 2024, Mr W tried to make an on-line transfer from his savings account with First Direct to an account he held elsewhere. But he was unable to make the transfer. So, he called First Direct.

First Direct explained that on-line payments to external accounts can only be made from current accounts. So, Mr W needed to transfer the funds from his savings account to his current account first. But to assist Mr W on this occasion, it made the transfer on Mr W's behalf from the savings account.

Mr W complained to First Direct. He said he felt the information on First Direct's on-line banking platform wasn't clear, and he said he'd spent two hours trying to resolve the issue. First Direct didn't think it had done anything wrong and didn't uphold the complaint. So, Mr W referred his complaint to this service.

Our investigator looked into the matter. She acknowledged Mr W's frustration and agreed the information he had seen on-line when attempting to make his payment could have been clearer. She said First Direct had apologised for any inconvenience Mr W had experienced but she didn't think First Direct had done anything wrong to the extent that a compensation payment was warranted.

Mr W didn't agree, and he asked for an ombudsman to review the complaint. 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.

Having done so, I've reached the same overall conclusion as the investigator. I know Mr W will be disappointed as I can see he feels strongly about what happened. And I note Mr W has said that he disagrees with the approach the investigator has taken.

But to uphold this complaint I'd need to find that First Direct had done something wrong or treated Mr W unfairly to the extent that it caused him a financial loss and/or material distress and inconvenience. And I don't think it did. I'll explain why.

A savings account is not a payment account and can't be used for such things as (but not limited to) direct debits, debit card transactions or on-line faster payments. And the terms and conditions of Mr W's savings account say: *'Taking money out: You can take money from the account at any time. But you can only pay money out of the account by internal transfer*

to another account with us'. So, I'm satisfied that First Direct didn't do anything wrong when Mr W was unable to do an on-line transfer from his savings account to an external account.

However, I do understand Mr W's frustration when the on-line screen he saw when trying to make the payment didn't make this clear. And I understand he had some problems getting through to someone who could help him when he called First Direct. All of which caused Mr W some inconvenience.

But using financial services isn't always hassle free. And I find any inconvenience Mr W experienced was short lived. When he did get through on the phone, First Direct was able to help him make the transfer he wanted to make, and the whole matter was resolved relatively quickly. And I've seen that Mr W was able to make a similar transfer a few days later having used the instructions First Direct provided.

I've seen that First Direct apologised to Mr W. And it confirmed that feedback about the information recorded on its online banking had been recorded. Overall, I find this was fair and reasonable outcome to this complaint. So, I won't be asking First Direct to take any further action in respect of this complaint.

But I want to reassure Mr W that it's not because I don't think he has a valid complaint. Rather I've not found that First Direct did anything wrong to the extent that a compensation payment is warranted, and an apology was enough in all the circumstances of this complaint.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 1 May 2024.

Sandra Greene
Ombudsman