

The complaint

Mr M says Nationwide Building Society mis-handled the administration of his credit card account which caused him distress and inconvenience.

What happened

Briefly, Mr M contacted Nationwide in April 2023 after noticing a transaction he'd made on his account wasn't listed in his online account details. He asked why it wasn't showing and raised concerns about poor customer service and the impact on his exposure to fraud.

Soon after raising the issue with Nationwide, Mr M noticed other transactions made around the same time weren't showing on his online statement summary either. Nationwide asked Mr M to provide supporting evidence of the issues he'd raised, including screen shots – which he did. On learning that, in fact, the non-appearance of certain transactions was due to a wider issue that was already known to Nationwide, Mr M complained to it that it had unnecessarily put him to trouble in asking him for proof of the problem.

Nationwide apologised that the transactions couldn't be viewed as they should have been online, due to an IT error. It also apologised that Mr M had been inconvenienced. To compensate him for the time he'd spent on the matter, Nationwide paid him £50.

Unhappy with Nationwide's response, Mr M brought his complaint to this service. He believed he was due £500 as compensation rather than £50.

One of our investigators looked into the complaint and didn't recommend that it should be upheld. The investigator recognised that Nationwide could have handled matters better than it did. And that Mr M's time had been wasted. But they considered that Nationwide's offer and apology was sufficient in the circumstances.

Mr M didn't agree with the investigator's findings, saying Nationwide had acted contrary to the expectations of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) that businesses should ensure fair treatment of customers. He emphasised that the focus of his complaint ought to be on *'the steps/actions Nationwide requested of me to highlight their know[n] error'*. The complaint was passed to me to review afresh.

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've thought very carefully about all the issues Mr M's raised regarding the actions of Nationwide and their alleged impact on him. In line with this service being quick and informal, I won't address them all in setting out my decision. Rather I've focussed on the key issues that I believe go to the heart of the complaint.

It should also be borne in mind that this service's aim is to ensure businesses compensate consumers where things have gone wrong. This can involve consideration of a business'

policies and procedures. But we're not the industry regulator – that's the FCA – and so it's not for us to punish or fine a business or require a business to change how it operates going forward.

With all of this in mind, I don't uphold this complaint. I'll explain why.

It's clear that Mr M's unhappy with the overall level of service he's been provided with by Nationwide. For instance, Mr M wasn't able to view certain transactions he thought he'd made. This, no doubt, would have caused him some uncertainty for a time as to whether they'd been made.

More importantly to Mr M, he was asked to provide supporting evidence of the problems he'd experienced. That's despite it transpiring that Nationwide was aware of a wider problem all along. This caused Mr M to waste time obtaining and providing proof of a problem Nationwide already knew about.

I understand that these issues – and especially this second one – have proved frustrating and disappointing for Mr M to have encountered. I'm pleased to see that Nationwide recognised the frustration and inconvenience it had caused Mr M and that it did so before the involvement of this service. It also offered Mr M £50 by way of compensation.

I recognise that Nationwide should have done better in the first place. But, the fact is, things went wrong, and that impacted on Mr M through no fault of his own. This is not the level of service Mr M would reasonably have expected to receive.

It's rarely straightforward to decide what represents an appropriate level of compensation for non-financial loss given its inherently subjective nature. Mr M experienced these particular problems and no-one else. I assure him I'm extremely mindful of that.

This said, I've taken account of this service's general approach to compensation for distress and inconvenience as set out on our website. This explains the level of award Mr M seeks – in the region of £500 – might typically involve significant distress and/or inconvenience that needs a lot of extra effort to sort out. The impact might last over many weeks or months or the mistake may have had a serious short-term impact. Our published approach explains that a small monetary award of less than £100 will typically be enough to compensate for more minor incidents that have caused minimal impact.

I've thought about this approach in light of the errors Nationwide made and the loss Mr M experienced. Thankfully, Nationwide was quickly able to confirm to Mr M that the transactions he'd made were processed as intended despite them not showing online initially. And while Mr M raised the potential for greater exposure to fraud, I'm glad to see those fears weren't realised. Had these outcomes been different this would probably have had an impact on the amount of compensation Mr M was due.

Overall, I'm persuaded that Nationwide's caused Mr M loss to the extent that it was fair to have offered him some compensation for distress and inconvenience. I realise Mr M's strength of feeling about the complaint and I'm sorry that he finds the offer Nationwide made to be far too low. But I think the offer's fair taking all the circumstances into account including the impact on Mr M.

My final decision

For the reasons given, I don't 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 30 May 2024.

Nimish Patel
Ombudsman