

The complaint

Mr I complains that Metro Bank PLC provided poor customer service during a withdrawal in branch. They also closed his account. Mr I would like compensation.

What happened

Mr I had an account with Metro.

Mr I said he wanted to withdraw £2,000 and went into branch on 4 November 2023. Mr I has said he wanted to withdraw this money in £50 notes, but Metro couldn't provide the whole amount in £50 notes. Mr I says he was unhappy at this as he had let Metro know in advance.

Mr I had to go to a different branch to withdraw his funds in the chosen denomination of notes.

Following the branch visit Mr I was given 60 days' notice to close his account by a letter dated 8 November 2023. His account would close 9 January 2023.

When Mr I complained to Metro, they said they should have provided better customer service when he went in branch and paid him £30 in compensation. They said the relationship between Mr I and the bank had broken down. They said Mr I's language in branch was unacceptable and they had taken the decision to close the account.

Mr I complained to our service. One of the investigators looked at the complaint.

Metro increased the offer in respect to the customer service element of Mr I's complaint to £120. Our investigator thought this was a fair amount. She thought Metro were entitled to take the decision to cease offering Mr I banking services and it hadn't done anything wrong when it decided this.

Mr I was unhappy with the view. He said he had spent money on taxis. He had to go to another branch to get his money and he doesn't think Metro have the right to close his account. He would like £1,000 compensation. Mr I also said he is disabled and that Metro were rude and racist to him and didn't take account of his disabilities.

As there was no agreement the matter has come 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.

I've firstly looked at the decision to close Mr I's account.

It's generally for banks to decide whether or not they want to provide, or to continue to provide, banking facilities to any particular customer. Unless there's a good reason to do so, this service won't usually say that a bank must keep a customer or require it to compensate a customer who has had their account closed.

Banks should, however, give reasonable notice before closing an account. Usually that means 60 days' notice, but it can be less depending on the circumstances. I can see that Metro wrote to Mr I on 8 November 2023 and let him know it was closing his account giving him 60 days' notice. So, I'm satisfied Metro closed the account in line with the account terms. And gave Mr I adequate time to open another bank account.

Metro have agreed that they didn't provide Mr I with a good customer service the day he went to branch. He wasn't able to get the cash he wanted in £50 notes, and he had to go to a different branch in order to do so. Metro have offered Mr I a total of £150 because of this inconvenience, £30 of which has already been paid to Mr I. Having looked at the information available to me I think this is a fair amount in the circumstances.

I realise that Mr I disputes what happened in branch the day that he went to collect his money. He disputes that he was rude and threatening to staff. In fact, Mr I says that the staff were rude to him, didn't take account of his disability and were racist. I appreciate that Mr I was frustrated at not being able to collect his money especially as he says he checked that it would be possible for him to pick up the cash in £50 notes.

Metro have said they weren't aware of Mr I's disabilities as he hadn't shared this with them.

Due to the evidence that is available I can't be sure of what exactly happened in branch or who said what. I have looked at the branch notes and they are not specific about what happened in branch but refer to Mr I's behaviour. I have seen notes from the bank as well as their policy regarding how to handle interactions with abusive customers. I have reached out to Mr I to request further information from him about what happened in branch from his point of view as Mr I also hasn't been specific about what happened in branch. Despite reaching out, Mr I hasn't provided us with any further information.

What I can be certain of is that the relationship between Mr I and Metro has broken down and as a result Metro gave Mr I 60 days' notice to close the account. I have already said that Metro are entitled to make the commercial decision as to who they want to do business with and as they gave Mr I 60 days' notice as set out in the terms and conditions I can't say they acted unfairly.

Mr I has said that Metro's actions in closing Mr I's account were prompted by racism. While I can appreciate this is his perspective, it is not my role to decide whether discrimination has taken place – only the courts have the power to decide this. I have, however, considered the relevant law in relation to what Mr I has said when deciding what I think is the fair and reasonable outcome. Part of this has meant considering the provisions of The Equality Act 2010 (The Act). And after looking at all the evidence, I've not seen anything to suggest that Metro decided to close the account for an improper reason.

For the reasons stated above I don't think Metro have acted unfairly in closing Mr I's account.

Putting things right

To put things right Metro should pay Mr I an additional £120 for the inconvenience he experienced in branch and having to go to a different branch to collect his cash in his chosen denominations.

My final decision

I partially uphold this complaint. I direct Metro Bank PLC to pay Mr I £120 for his material distress.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr I to accept or reject my decision before 28 June 2024.

Esperanza Fuentes
Ombudsman