

The complaint

Ms G complains that Nationwide Building Society didn't credit her account with the correct amount following a cash deposit she made.

What happened

On 24 April 2023, Ms G attended a Nationwide branch to deposit cash. Ms G says she had £4,000 to pay into her account.

When Ms G passed the cash to the cashier it was separated and counted by two cashiers. Ms G was informed once all the cash was counted that there was £3,500 in cash, not £4,000.

Ms G raised concerns about the counting of her cash. Nationwide reviewed her complaint and explained it hadn't found any evidence the cash had been incorrectly counted. It said it had reviewed the CCTV and it shows the cash being counted in view of the cameras and it couldn't agree with Ms G's version of events.

Dissatisfied with this review Ms G referred her complaint to our service. An Investigator looked into Ms G's concerns and based on the evidence they were satisfied Ms G provided £3,500 to the cashier, not £4,000. Ms G disagreed with this review and asked for her complaint to be reviewed by an ombudsman.

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 understand how strongly Ms G feels about this complaint. She has raised a number of points and although I may not mention every point raised, I've considered everything she has said but limited my findings to the areas which impact on the outcome of the case. No discourtesy is intended by this, it just reflects the informal nature of our service.

Ms G's complaint centres around events which occurred in branch. I can't be certain of what exactly happened during this visit. Ms G and Nationwide have different accounts of what happened. And when evidence is incomplete or contradictory, I base my decision on the balance of probabilities. In other words, what I consider most likely to have happened, given the available evidence and wider circumstances. My review of the evidence and circumstances has led me to the same overall conclusions as the investigator, for broadly the same reasons. I will explain why.

Ms G has explained in detail what happened when she attended branch to deposit the cash. Ms G says she had counted the money beforehand and is confident there was £4,000. Ms G has provided details of the withdrawals she made in the previous months to support her claim that there was £4,000 to pay in. Nationwide has provided CCTV, which I have reviewed very carefully. This footage shows Ms G in branch and approach the counter with the cash. It is handed over to the cashier, who begins to count the notes. This cashier,

hands over some of the cash, which she had just counted, to another cashier who counts it independently. The total amount of this cash was £2,500.

Once the second cashier counts the cash and confirms there is £2,500 a yellow band is placed around the cash, which Nationwide has confirmed is the band used for £2,500. The remaining cash is then counted and this totals £1,000. This amount is also counted again by the second cashier.

I understand Ms G's concerns about the cash being separated and it not being in her view at all times. However, from what I can see the cash is counted in front of her at first and then taken away for checking. This dual counting process was used to ensure the amounts counted were accurate and it's also in place to prevent any issues with fraud. From what I can see the cash is counted three times, and each time it totals £3,500. It is also significant that a counting machine was also used to ensure accuracy. In my view, given what I can see on the CCTV footage, I can't see how £500 could be taken from the cash handed over without this being noticed.

In addition, Nationwide has also confirmed the branch cash takings balanced for the day, with no discrepancies. This suggests the remaining £500 which Ms G says is missing wasn't miscounted or misplaced. Further, the members of staff involved haven't had any similar issues or complaints raised about their handling of cash deposits, and they are long standing members of staff. This all suggests to me that there's been no obvious banking error or staff misconduct.

Ms G has very strong views about what happened, and I understand this incident has caused her significant distress. And so, I know I'm going to disappoint her when I say, I don't consider the most likely explanation here is that Nationwide has made a mistake or stolen from her. So, the only conclusion I can make on a fair and reasonable basis – which is what our rules ask us to do – is that Ms G may have miscounted the cash before she took it into branch. If Ms G doesn't accept my decision, she is free to pursue this further in court or with the relevant authorities, subject to any time limits.

My final decision

For the reasons explained above, my final decision is that I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms G to accept or reject my decision before 17 April 2024.

Chandni Green
Ombudsman