

The complaint

Mr H is unhappy that Lloyds Bank Plc decided to move him to digital statements and with their reasons for doing so.

What happened

In October 2023, Lloyds Bank emailed Mr H to inform him that they were changing the way they send statements for some credit cards, current and savings accounts from 1 November 2023. They said they were experiencing some issues and may not be able to send as many statements by post as they normally do.

Lloyds Bank explained that since Mr H uses internet banking, they'd only send him statements digitally which he could access via internet banking or the mobile banking app. They explained how this would work and made him aware that they'd send him an email to let him know when his statements were ready to view. They also said they'd be sending him a letter which includes a list of Mr H's affected accounts. They apologised for any issues this change would cause but said that they'd let Mr H know as soon as they were able to offer him paper statements again.

Unhappy with this, Mr H raised a complaint. He asked Lloyds Bank to explain the precise problem that prevents them from sending him statements by post. He asked them to admit that they had no intention of offering paper statements again.

Lloyds Bank reiterated that they were having some issues which meant they couldn't send as many paper statements as they normally do. They said that since Mr H was registered for internet banking, they made the decision to send some account statements digitally whilst they worked on these issues. They apologised for the inconvenience caused and reverted Mr H's accounts to paper statements.

Mr H referred his complaint to our service. He said Lloyds Bank had failed to admit what the issues were in their final response letter. He felt Lloyds Bank were lying to customers in pursuit of more profit and tried to make customers complicit in the act. He feels they should openly state what the issues were and how long they'd take to correct them or admit that their objective was to force people to digital statements with no hope of ever going back to paper statements. He felt that if customers are only able to have electronic statements, there must be a legal move which makes banks provide paper statements should customers need them as proof for other agencies at no cost.

Also, Mr H said that he'd received an email from Lloyds Bank telling him that he'd changed his statements from paper to electronic when he hadn't. He said he suspected this to be a spam email and reported it to Lloyds Bank but he never received a response from them. He explained this destroyed his confidence in their fraud reporting system.

Our investigator said she didn't think Lloyds Bank had acted unfairly or unreasonably towards Mr H as they reinstated paper statements for him immediately after he made them aware he was unhappy. She also said she wouldn't expect Lloyds Bank to respond to the reporting of a phishing email and they'd review this as part of their internal procedures when

they receive this notification. So, she didn't ask Lloyds Bank to do anything more. Mr H disagreed and asked for an ombudsman to review his complaint.

Mr H said that Lloyds Bank had presented the need for changing to digital statements due to a computer or other technical issue and not as a corporate enforced decision affecting every customer for life. He felt that since Lloyds Bank were able to immediately return him to paper statements, it was clear that their reason for making the change was a lie. He feels that corporate bodies should be censured severely for deliberately lying to customers to achieve increase in profits. He believes that Lloyds Bank are notorious for being untrustworthy and that regulators shouldn't be condoning these acts.

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.

Firstly, I'd like to clarify that my decision only relates to the complaint Mr H made to Lloyds Bank about moving him to digital statements and their reasons for doing so. I've not considered Mr H's concerns about him losing confidence in Lloyds Bank's fraud reporting system after he reported a phishing email.

This is because I've looked at the complaint Mr H made to Lloyds Bank and the complaint point about the fraud reporting system wasn't raised, nor have Lloyds Bank addressed it within their final response letter. Mr H also hasn't provided any evidence to suggest that he raised this as a complaint with Lloyds Bank, so, I can't consider this aspect within my decision here.

If Mr H would like to pursue this aspect of his complaint, he'll need to raise it with Lloyds Bank first and give them an opportunity to respond. Mr H can then complain to our service about it, if he remains unhappy with Lloyds Bank's response, or if they don't provide a final response letter within eight weeks of him raising the complaint with them.

I've looked at the terms and conditions of Mr H's account. It explains that if Mr H is registered for internet banking or uses the mobile banking app, Lloyds Bank may send statements and other communications by post or digitally to his digital inbox, or both. So, I'm satisfied that this means that Lloyds Bank are entitled to send, under the terms and conditions of the account, statements to Mr H digitally since he's registered for internet banking.

I think Lloyds Bank treated Mr H fairly by giving him a month's notice of moving him to digital statements and sufficient explanation for why they'd made that decision. I don't think Lloyds Bank are obliged to share with Mr H the specific reasons for why they're experiencing issues with sending paper statements.

I know Mr H feels strongly that Lloyds Bank were making the change to move all customers to digital statements to increase their profits with no intention of going back to paper statements. Unfortunately, I don't think there's sufficient evidence to support this.

I don't agree that Lloyds Bank reverting Mr H back to paper statements means they were lying about the reasons for moving him to digital statements. The email Lloyds Bank sent clearly explained that they weren't able to send as many statements by post as they normally do. This means that they still had the facility to send some statements by post, for example, to customers who weren't registered for internet banking.

I've also reviewed the email Lloyds Bank sent to Mr H as well as their final response letter.

I'm satisfied that they were clear that the change in how they send statements was temporary while they worked on the issues they were experiencing. They'd also told Mr H that they'd let him know as soon as they were able to offer paper statements again.

I think Lloyds Bank have already offered a fair resolution to this complaint as they've apologised for the inconvenience caused and changed Mr H back to paper statements promptly. And Mr H hasn't been significantly impacted as there were no statements produced on his account between Lloyds Bank moving him to digital statements and then reverting him back to paper statements.

All things considered and taking into account the individual circumstances of Mr H's complaint, I'm satisfied Lloyds Bank have treated him fairly and I won't be asking them to do anything else.

My final decision

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

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 22 April 2024.

Ash Weedon
Ombudsman