

The complaint

In summary, Miss S is unhappy that Clydesdale Bank Plc trading as Virgin Money, blocked her credit card on several occasions whilst she was abroad. She wants to be compensated for the costs she incurred as a result of the card being blocked.

Although Miss S' account is with Virgin Money, I will refer to Clydesdale in my decision, as it is the business responsible for the complaint.

What happened

In August 2023 Miss S tried to use her credit card when travelling abroad. She said she was left out of pocket as a result of the problems she had using the card. In particular she said she incurred call charges when she had to call Clydesdale from abroad to try and resolve the problems.

Clydesdale responded to Miss S' concerns. It didn't uphold her complaint but did offer her some compensation as a gesture of goodwill, and for the time it took for her call to be answered. Miss S then referred her complaint to this service. One of our investigators looked into her concerns and explained why they didn't think Clydesdale needed to do anything else.

Miss S didn't agree with what the investigator said, so the case has been passed to me for review.

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 decided not to uphold Miss S' complaint. I'll explain why.

I do understand that it must have been very frustrating for Miss S to have had her credit card account blocked, and not being able to use it when she was travelling abroad. However, Clydesdale has an obligation to protect its customers' accounts against potential fraud. So, I don't think it was unreasonable of Clydesdale to have put a temporary block on Miss S' account, if it was concerned that a transaction on that account might have been potentially fraudulent.

I understand that Miss S is also concerned that she was provided with incorrect information when she called from abroad to unblock her card. I've listened to the calls she had with Clydesdale. I am satisfied that it was explained to her when Clydesdale's representative was adding the note on her account about her being on holiday abroad, that if there were any suspected fraudulent transactions she would be contacted on her mobile number. So, I think she would have understood that there might potentially be further blocks on the account, notwithstanding the holiday note being added to her account.

Clydesdale's terms and conditions do explain that it doesn't guarantee that a card holder will always be able to use a card. But I've also considered whether it treated Miss S fairly and reasonably in relation to this issue. Taking into account that the blocks occurred as a result of potential fraud alerts, I can't say that it didn't treat her fairly. And whilst I accept that Miss S says she didn't receive calls from it following the block being put onto her account, Clydesdale's records do indicate that it did attempt to call her.

Although I don't think Clydesdale did anything wrong in blocking Miss S' account or with the information it gave her, it has offered her a total of £35 as a gesture of good will; and to acknowledge that the call waiting time she experienced, was longer than it thought it should have been. I think that is a reasonable offer on its part.

My final decision

My decision is not to uphold Miss S' complaint and I don't think Clydesdale Bank Plc needs to do anything more, if it has already paid the £35 to Miss S. If the compensation hasn't been paid yet and if Miss S wants to accept it, Clydesdale Bank Plc should pay the £35 to Miss S on receipt of acceptance of the offer from her.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms S to accept or reject my decision before 14 June 2024.

Simon Dibble
Ombudsman