

The complaint

Mr P complains that HSBC UK Bank Plc unfairly blocked his attempted transactions.

What happened

Mr P says he tried to make two payments to his own account from his HSBC account. He says the payments were blocked by HSBC which meant he lost interest. Mr P says HSBC didn't ask him security questions when he spoke to it but simply made statements to him.

HSBC says it reviewed the telephone call between it and Mr P in November 2023. It says it didn't make a mistake and acted in line with agreed account terms and conditions when it had security concerns.

Mr P brought his complaint to us, and our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. The investigator thought HSBC was entitled to block a payment where it had security concerns in line with account terms and conditions.

Mr P doesn't accept that view. In summary he says HSBC wasted his time and didn't ask security questions but simply read out statements.

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 have come to the overall view that I don't uphold this complaint.

I am sure Mr P appreciates that fraud is a major problem for banks and building societies. And that they must have security measures in place to protect its and its customers money. I appreciate that inevitably means that on occasions legitimate transactions may be held pending security checks. And that means a customer will be caused inconvenience but that doesn't mean that a business has made a mistake or acted unfairly.

I have looked carefully at Mr P's account terms and conditions which I am satisfied he would have agreed to when the account was first opened. Those terms and conditions make clear that HSBC may block an attempted transaction where it has security concerns. So, I don't think HSBC made a mistake or acted unfairly by blocking Mr P's attempted transactions when its systems raised security concerns.

I appreciate of course this was Mr P's money and his to spend as he sees fit. But I also think HSBC was entitled to block these attempted payments and acted in line with agreed account terms and conditions.

The key part of this complaint is the telephone call between the parties, and I have listened to it carefully. I appreciate Mr P says he wasn't asked questions by HSBC, but I am satisfied he was asked questions to confirm his identity which he answered. And that HSBC then proceeded to ask about the transactions themselves. I am satisfied that HSBC was entitled to ask the questions it did and acted reasonably throughout the call. I am also satisfied that

HSBC repeatedly tried to explain why it was asking the questions it was. I think the length of call was a direct result of Mr P repeatedly interrupting the HSBC staff member and complaining about the process as well as the type of questions or statements he suggested were being put to him.

I have made clear I accept this was Mr P's money, but HSBC was reasonably entitled to ask the questions it did as well as follow its security process. I am satisfied that when the security process was completed, the transactions were authorised.

Overall, I'm satisfied HSBC acted in line with agreed account terms and conditions and was entitled to ask Mr P the questions it did about the payments. It follows that I can't fairly order HSBC do anything further in the circumstances of this complaint. I also make clear to Mr P that complaint handling is not a regulated activity and so I can't consider any complaints Mr P may have about how HSBC handled his complaint

My final decision

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 P to accept or reject my decision before 26 June 2024.

David Singh
Ombudsman