

## **The complaint**

Mr S complains that Nationwide Building Society ("Nationwide") won't pay him the balance on his savings account, the passbook for which he has recently rediscovered. Mr S says he did not receive the money from this account.

## **What happened**

Mr S found a passbook for Derbyshire Building Society whilst cleaning to then find the account had migrated to Nationwide. Mr S was previously unaware of this and when he tried to withdraw the money at Nationwide, he was told the account had been closed in 2014 and the money withdrawn.

Mr S said he keeps records of everything and can't recall making the withdrawal. He's asked for Nationwide to provide proof he withdrew it or to return the money to him. Nationwide told him their records showed the account was closed on 27 November 2014 and the full balance was paid out but as almost 10 years had passed, they weren't able to give any more information. And it apologised for a member of staff in branch originally giving him a different account opening date to the one shown on their records.

Mr S brought the complaint to our service. Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. She thought, on the information from Nationwide, it was more likely than not that Mr S had withdrawn this money. Given the passage of time she didn't expect Nationwide to produce a copy of the withdrawal slip from a transaction 10 years ago.

Mr S didn't agree. He remained of the view there had been some wrongdoing by a member of staff at the bank and he had been robbed of this money. He asked for an ombudsman to review the matter.

## **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.

In cases like this, where some of the evidence is inconclusive, I reach my decision on the balance of probabilities. That means I'll look at all the available evidence and decide what I think is most likely to have happened. Having considered everything afresh, I've come to the view this isn't a complaint I can uphold. I'll explain why.

Mr S recently rediscovered the passbook for his Derbyshire Building Society account and says he does not recall receiving the money shown in this account. He thinks Nationwide should pay him the balance shown in the passbook and interest. But I disagree. Nationwide have produced evidence from their records to show what happened to the account after it was opened with Derbyshire in 1997. It migrated to Nationwide and an account there was opened on 22 November 2014. The records Nationwide has produced show the account closure and payment out of the balance on 27 November 2014.

I understand Mr S says he doesn't recall the withdrawal and would like to see the signed instructions for the transaction. But it was 10 years ago and Nationwide isn't obliged to retain

customer records indefinitely. Generally, financial institutions only keep account records for up to six years. So, I can't say it's unreasonable that Nationwide isn't now able to produce that for Mr S. But, on the information Nationwide *have* been able to produce, I'm satisfied this account was closed.

I appreciate being in physical possession of the passbook showing a balance might make Mr S feel his case - that cannot have withdrawn the money - is strengthened. However, banks and building societies did not generally refuse a customer access to their money if, for instance, they had mislaid the passbook as long as it was satisfied it was dealing with the account holder.

Overall, on the evidence before me I'm satisfied this account was closed on 27 November 2014 and the funds paid out. On balance, I think it more likely than not that Mr S withdrew that money. So, I can't say Nationwide have done anything wrong here. It follows that I am not persuaded Nationwide should be required to pay Mr S the amount shown in the passbook plus interest.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

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

Annabel O'Sullivan  
**Ombudsman**