

## **The complaint**

Ms C complained about the service she received from HSBC UK Bank Plc ('HSBC') in connection with a failed international money transfer.

## **What happened**

On 8 July 2024, Ms C placed instructions via Online Banking to transfer a three-figure amount in a foreign currency from her HSBC UK (foreign) Currency Account to an account she held at an overseas branch of HSBC.

Ms C saw onscreen confirmation that the transfer of the amount she'd inputted had been completed. So when the money failed to arrive in her overseas account, she contacted HSBC about her missing money. She used HSBC's Live Chat service before being advised to call HSBC's telephone banking team for more information. Ms C asked to speak to a manager and said she wanted to complain.

HSBC didn't uphold her complaint. It mainly said Live Chat had explained it had only limited access to information and so Ms C was asked to contact HSBC's telephone banking Customer Services Team who could investigate what happened to her money. HSBC said that when Ms C was informed that a manager would tell her the same thing and her call was passed to a different call handler, she was provided with information about how to complain.

Ms C brought her complaint to us and one of our investigators looked into what happened. The investigator didn't uphold Ms C's complaint. She was satisfied that the money had by now been refunded to Ms C's account and that HSBC had done nothing wrong and dealt with her in a fair and reasonable manner. So the investigator said she wouldn't be asking HSBC to do anything further.

Ms C disagreed, saying that the failed transaction had left her short of money overseas where it was needed. She was unhappy that there was no correspondence from HSBC about the failed transfer and said the money was only returned after she complained to us. She didn't think HSBC should have informed her that the transaction was completed when she didn't receive any money and did not inform her that the transaction failed – which she only found out after one week.

The complaint has come to me for a final decision.

## **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've carried out an independent review and having done so, I've reached the same conclusion as our investigator.

As I understand things, Ms C was mostly worried about her missing money when she brought her complaint to us and I'm pleased that this is no longer a concern. But she

remains very unhappy about the way that HSBC handled this matter generally and the service it provided.

In order to uphold Ms C's complaint, I would have to find that HSBC made an error or acted unfairly or unreasonably. So this is the focus of my decision.

HSBC actioned the transfer in line with the instructions Ms C inputted when completing the online screens she needed to fill in when making an international payment. So HSBC didn't do anything wrong when it showed her an onscreen message saying, correctly, that it had completed the transfer out of her UK account.

Unfortunately, the transfer failed later on when the bank Ms C sent the money to was not able to process it due to 'invalid beneficiary'.

I am satisfied that HSBC wasn't responsible for the transfer failing. Ms C wondered if the problem might lie with the way HSBC's online form required her to input her name and that this didn't match the way her name appeared on her overseas account. HSBC told her this wasn't likely to be an issue. She has expressed concern that this 'belittles my origin, race and culture of how the name works'. But HSBC's form design, and how businesses choose to operate are matters that come under the oversight of the regulator - the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). So it isn't any part of my remit to tell HSBC how it should design its online forms.

HSBC's terms and conditions (which Ms C would have signed up to in order to use its services) say that when things go wrong, 'We'll do all we can to carry out our side of this agreement'. And I've thought carefully about the service HSBC provided to Ms C when she thought her money might be missing.

HSBC wasn't made aware that the transfer had failed until 10 July 2024, two days after Ms C had given instructions for the transfer (and after it had already responded to Ms C's complaint). HSBC told us that no further information was provided and there was no chance to respond or engage with the other bank about this. HSBC received the money back on 14 July 2024 and within two working days of receipt, Ms C's money was credited back into her account. HSBC wrote to her to confirm the payment the same day. I am satisfied that HSBC dealt with everything within a reasonable timescale.

I can completely understand what a worrying time it was for Ms C when she thought her money might have gone missing. But HSBC had told her during the Live Chat on 10 July 2024 that her money would be safe as she was transferring between HSBC accounts and it told her how she could check the status of her transferred funds. So whilst the first written communication about this wasn't sent to her until 16 July 2024, this isn't enough of a reason for me to uphold her complaint as I consider that HSBC treated her fairly and reasonably overall.

I've taken into account Ms C's frustrations about the Live Chat discussion but I haven't identified any poor service issue here. I don't think it was unreasonable when HSBC explained that a manager wouldn't be any better placed to help her when it had already provided a contact number Ms C could ring for more information about the status of the transfer. And how a financial business operates its complaints procedure falls under the FCA remit – so it wouldn't be open to me to tell HSBC it has to be willing to provide an email address for customers to raise a complaint. HSBC offered to take details of Ms C's complaint over the phone and directed her to the online link if she wanted to file the complaint herself.

After taking into account everything that Ms C and HSBC have told me, I haven't seen enough to show that HSBC did anything wrong or that it treated Ms C in a way that wasn't fair and reasonable. So I can't uphold this complaint.

I hope that setting things out as I've done helps explain how I've reached my conclusions. I appreciate that this isn't the outcome Ms C hoped for but hope she will feel that the Financial Ombudsman Service has fully considered the 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 Ms C to accept or reject my decision before 1 November 2024.

Susan Webb  
**Ombudsman**