

The complaint

Mr F complains that American Express Services Europe Limited trading as American Express (Amex) unfairly refused to allow him to participate in its referral programme.

Mr F says he has lost out on possible financial rewards.

What happened

Mr F holds a platinum Amex credit card. He was unhappy when Amex told him that he didn't qualify for the referral bonus without giving a specific reason.

Our investigator didn't uphold Mr F's complaint. He said that Amex is entitled to decide which customers qualify for the referral programme and didn't think it had to supply a specific reason.

Mr F disagreed with the investigation outcome. As a long standing customer, he didn't think Amex's treatment of him was fair. Mr F wondered if he had done something wrong and if so, whether he could remedy it. He was concerned that somebody cloned his account or that Amex had made a mistake.

Our investigator highlighted the terms of the referral programme, which say "your Card Account's eligibility to participate in the Referral Programme is based on your overall credit rating and other factors including your Account history with American Express."

Our investigator didn't think Amex was obliged to provide more detailed reasons why a customer doesn't qualify for a referral bonus as this could leave it open to manipulation.

Our investigator said he had seen no evidence to suggest that Mr F's card had been cloned but that he should contact Amex if he was concerned about this.

Mr F says he has never missed a payment, his credit rating is very good and Amex has not raised any concerns with him about his account history. Mr F thinks that "other factors" is an unfair term in Amex's contract.

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 am sorry to disappoint Mr F but I agree with our investigator that Amex has not treated him unfairly. The businesses that we cover sometimes share information with us on a confidential basis. From reading the information which Amex has supplied about why it would not allow Mr F to participate in the referral programme, I am satisfied that this was based on other factors which included his account history.

As our investigator has said, if Amex were obliged to give detailed reasons why it decided a customer was not eligible to participate, this could potentially leave the referral programme open to manipulation. So, I don't require Amex, as part of resolving this complaint, to supply

Mr F with the detailed reasoning he seeks.

As a longstanding customer, with a good repayment history, I can understand Mr F's concerns. But I have not seen evidence to suggest that Amex made a mistake or treated Mr F unfairly by deciding that he was not eligible to participate in the referral programme. So, I don't require Amex to respond further to 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 F to accept or reject my decision before 15 November 2024.

Gemma Bowen
Ombudsman