

The complaint

Mrs E complains that her Tesco Personal Finance PLC credit card is often declined in supermarkets, restaurants and shops.

What happened

In April 2024, Mrs E complained to Tesco that her credit card had been repeatedly declined. One shop's staff member told Mrs E they always have problems with Tesco credit cards. In its final response of 2 May 2024, Tesco said the transactions were declined because Mrs E had reached her limit for contactless transactions and had entered her PIN incorrectly.

Unhappy with this response, Mrs E referred her complaint to our Service. Mrs E says she used her correct PIN – Tesco confirmed her PIN was the same one she had stored as a reminder on her phone. She said it is highly embarrassing when her card is declined, and she missed out on Clubcard points when she couldn't use her Tesco credit card. Mrs E wanted a list of all the declined transactions and the Clubcard points she missed out on.

In response to our service, Tesco said it had reviewed Mrs E's transactions for the last 90 days and provided copies of the declined codes. These showed Mrs E's transactions were either declined because of an incorrect PIN or the limit for contactless transactions was reached. Tesco said it can't tell Mrs E what the contactless transaction limit is as it varies. Tesco said that from January 2024, it had sent Mrs E messages when her transactions had been declined and it told her when she needed to contact Tesco to unblock her card.

One of our Investigators reviewed Mrs E's complaint but didn't uphold it. The Investigator said Tesco has the right to implement security measures and it is not in our remit to interfere with its protocols. Our Investigator didn't think the evidence showed the declined transactions were the result of Tesco's error.

In response, Mrs E said her card was declined for small amounts and on the first attempt of the day, so her limit would not have been reached. Mrs E said Tesco had told her it couldn't say what the limit for contactless transactions was. Mrs E said she hadn't got her PIN wrong and thought the declined transactions were because of an error on Tesco's part. Mrs E said she hadn't received any text messages about declined transactions. Mrs E wanted a list of all her transactions including declined transactions.

Our Investigator explained that Tesco's contactless transaction limit was commercially sensitive information, and there was no evidence of an error on Tesco's part. Mrs E was provided with a list of the declined transactions and their declined codes. Tesco also clarified it had sent Mrs E push messages on its mobile app instead of text messages.

Mrs E said Tesco had not provided the full transaction report. Mrs E said some of her declined transactions were for small amounts. Our Investigator confirmed to Mrs E that the transaction list contained the same declined codes in its screenshots of Tesco's internal systems (which it had not consented to our service sharing with Mrs E). Mrs E asked for an Ombudsman to review her complaint, so this has come to me for a 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.

Having done so, I've not upheld this complaint for the same reasons as our Investigator. Here, Tesco is obliged to provide security measures to protect Mrs E's account and it is not for our service to tell Tesco to change its processes or systems. Mrs E says Tesco won't tell her how many contactless transactions she can make before her card is declined. But Tesco has explained this limit can change on a daily basis, and this is also commercially sensitive information that it is not obliged to disclose.

Mrs E says she thinks the transactions were declined as a result of Tesco's error. But I don't think the evidence available supports this. The declined codes, that Mrs E has been provided with, show transactions were mostly declined because she had reached the limit of contactless transactions or had entered an incorrect PIN. If Mrs E had reached Tesco's limit for the number of contactless payments, it would not matter if the transactions were under the contactless spending limit of £100 per transaction. I don't think the evidence shows the transactions were declined because of any error on Tesco's part. And as I don't think the evidence shows Tesco made an error here, and Mrs E was clearly aware of the declined transactions, I don't think it makes a difference whether she received Tesco's push messages in its app.

I know Mrs E is frustrated she didn't receive the screenshots of Tesco's internal systems. If Mrs E chooses to make a Data Subject Access Request, that is up to her. But Mrs E had not previously made such a request, so it has not formed part of this complaint. And as I said above, I am satisfied Mrs E has been provided with the key information here – she has seen the list of the declined transactions and the reasons for those declines.

I accept Mrs E has been caused inconvenience and embarrassment by the declined transactions. I know my decision will disappoint Mrs E. But overall, I don't think there's enough evidence to show Mrs E's transactions were the result of an error on Tesco's part so I cannot uphold Mrs E's complaint. It follows that I don't think any compensation is due here.

My final decision

I've not upheld Mrs E's complaint for the reasons explained above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs E to accept or reject my decision before 8 January 2025.

Victoria Blackwood

Ombudsman