

## **The complaint**

Ms D complains that HSBC UK Bank Plc (HSBC) failed to provide sufficient support to enable her to provide the identification information they required to approve a new account with an overdraft.

## **What happened**

In September 2024 Ms D applied for a new account with a £1,000 overdraft to support her university studies.

HSBC wanted to verify her identity and address details, but Ms D says the information they asked for was confusing and inconsistent and that it meant she had to make many calls to them to clarify what was required.

HSBC offered Ms D £150 compensation in respect of the distress and inconvenience she'd been caused, but Ms D thought they should offer more. She referred her complaint to this service. Our investigator thought the compensation was reasonable in the circumstances.

Ms D was still dissatisfied. She detailed the correspondence she'd had with HSBC and the lack of clarity and support that she said had been provided. She said the issue had made her sick and impacted her mental health. She asked for a final decision by an ombudsman.

## **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 know it will disappoint Ms D, but I think HSBC have been reasonable here. I'll explain why.

Where the information I've got is incomplete, unclear, or contradictory, as some of it is here, I have to base my decision on the balance of probabilities.

I've read and considered the whole file, but I'll concentrate my comments on what I think is relevant. If I don't comment on any specific point, it's not because I've failed to take it on board and think about it but because I don't think I need to comment on it in order to reach what I think is the right outcome.

Legal, regulatory and risk management considerations required HSBC to verify Ms D's identity and address before approving her bank account, so I don't think they were unreasonable to request the information they did.

HSBC agreed that they didn't provide correct advice to Ms D all of the time. For instance, they told Ms D that they'd received and accepted her documentation when that wasn't correct. It's clear that Ms D was confused by their explanations and HSBC haven't sought to challenge her assertion that she made a lot of calls to them to clarify matters. I've only been provided with a few of those calls as they're all of the ones that HSBC have been able to locate. On balance, I'm prepared to accept that HSBC's communication could have been better and that they should compensate Ms D for the distress and inconvenience that

caused. But there were also clearly some problems with the information Ms D provided. The driving license had a different address, and the bank statements were from a HSBC account when this wasn't allowed. So, I don't think the delays were unavoidable.

Taking everything into account I think HSBC's offer of £150 was reasonable compensation and in line with what this service would usually award in similar circumstances. I'm not asking HSBC to provide any further compensation.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons I've given above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms D to accept or reject my decision before 24 January 2025.

Phillip McMahon  
**Ombudsman**