

The complaint

Mr K is unhappy with several aspects of the service he received from Metro Bank PLC surrounding an ISA transfer.

What happened

Mr K wanted to transfer his ISA to Metro from another provider (which I'll refer to as 'X') and he submitted an ISA transfer request to Metro on 2 January 2024. However, there were several procedural problems that affected the ISA transfer, which didn't complete correctly until 8 March 2024. Mr K wasn't happy with how Metro had conducted the ISA transfer or with the service he'd received from Metro during that time. So, he raised a complaint.

Metro responded to Mr K and explained that the procedural issues that had affected the ISA transfer had been caused by X, and not by Metro. However, Metro did note that one of their agents had referred Mr K back to X directly, when it may have been possible for Metro to have contacted X themselves on Mr K's behalf. Metro apologised to Mr K for this and paid £50 to him as compensation for any trouble or upset he may have incurred as a result. Mr K wasn't satisfied with Metro's response, so he referred his complaint to this service.

One of our investigators looked at this complaint and liaised with Mr K and Metro about it. During their investigation, Metro reconsidered their position and concluded that there were aspects of Mr K's complaint that hadn't been adequately addressed in their formal response to it. Specifically, Metro noted that on one occasion Mr K had telephoned his local Metro branch but had been unable to get through, and Metro also felt that its complaints team should have made a call to Mr K in addition to sending a response letter, so that they could provide a more detailed explanation to Mr K of what had happened with the ISA transfer.

As a result of their reassessment of Mr K's complaint, Metro offered to pay a further £100 compensation to Mr K, taking the total amount of compensation payable to £150. However, our investigator felt that a higher amount of compensation was fairly merited here and recommended that Metro pay a further £200 to Mr K, taking the total compensation amount to £250.

Metro didn't respond to our investigator's recommendation, and Mr K felt that Metro should be instructed to pay a much higher award of compensation to him. So, the matter was escalated to an ombudsman 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.

Having done so, I note that when the ISA transfer was eventually completed it was backdated by Metro to an appropriate date, so that Mr K hasn't lost out financially because of what happened. I'm also satisfied that the procedural reasons why the ISA transfer didn't complete in a timely manner were the result of errors made by X and weren't the result of any mistakes made by Metro.

For instance, X initially issued the ISA transfer to Metro electronically, at a time when Metro wasn't accepting ISA transfers via electronic channels. Additionally, when X sent replacement transfer information to Metro the information was incorrect and inconsistent with that sent previously, including that the incorrect tax year subscription was provided by X.

Mr K has explained that he's unhappy that he had to make several calls to Metro because of the delayed ISA transfer. But given that I don't feel that Metro should fairly or reasonably be held accountable for the delays that affected the ISA transfer, it follows that I also don't feel that they should be held accountable for the calls that Mr K had to make to Metro chasing a resolution to the ISA transfer.

Mr K has also explained that he's unhappy with how Metro handled the complaint that he raised with them about the matter. But the rules by which this service must abide - which can be found in the Dispute Resolution ("DISP") section of the Financial Conduct Authority ("FCA") Handbook – include that this service can only consider points of complaint about specified financial matters. And how a business handles a complaint is not one of the specified financial matters listed in the DISP rules.

This means that this service can't consider a complaint about how a business has handled a complaint. And this is true even when the subject matter of the complaint relates to one of the specified financial matters that this service can consider complaints about, as is the case here. In short, this service can consider complaints about financial matters, but we can't consider a complaint made by a customer if they are unhappy with how a business has handled their complaint about that financial matter.

All of which means that, while I appreciate and acknowledge the breadth of Mr K's dissatisfaction here, I'm unable to consider his displeasure with how Metro have handled his complaint – because it isn't within my authority or remit to do so. And I won't be considering Mr K's unhappiness at the delays he experienced with the ISA transfer – because I don't feel that Metro should fairly or reasonably be held accountable for those delays.

However, I will be considering Mr K's dissatisfaction with the service he received from Metro when he engaged with them about the ISA transfer. This includes that Mr K was asked to contact X himself by Metro when Metro could have contacted X directly on his behalf. And it also includes the difficulty that Mr K had when trying to telephone his local Metro branch.

To that end, I've listened to several recorded calls between Mr K and Metro and considered the service that Mr K received on those calls and at other times when he engaged with Metro. And while I feel that in general that Mr K did receive good service from Metro, which it must be reiterated was provided to Mr K regarding procedural issues that I don't consider Metro to be responsible or accountable for, there were some instances where I feel that Metro should have provided a better standard of service to Mr K – most notably the instances specified in the preceding paragraph.

Accordingly, I'll be upholding this complaint in Mr K's favour and instructing Metro to pay a further £200 compensation to him – in addition to the £50 that Mr K has already received.

In taking this position I've considered the impact of what happened on Mr K. This includes that at the time of the events in question, Mr K had unfortunately suffered a very recent family bereavement, which I feel will have exacerbated the impact of these events on him. And I've also considered the general framework this service uses when assessing compensation amounts, details of which are on this service's website.

I'm aware that Mr K feels that a much larger amount of compensation should be merited here and that he's asked this service to consider compensation for several specified

instances on an individual basis. But this service considers the overall impact of events under consideration and doesn't instruct compensation on an individual cumulative basis as Mr K would like. And, as explained previously, there are several aspects of Mr K's complaint which I'm either unable to consider or which I don't feel that Metro should be held accountable for.

All of which means that I feel that an instruction to Metro to pay a further £200 compensation to Mr K does provide a fair outcome to this complaint. I realise this might not be the outcome that Mr K was wanting. But I hope that he'll understand, given all that I've explained, why I've made the final decision that I have.

Putting things right

Metro must pay a further £200 to Mr K.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint against Metro Bank PLC on the basis explained above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 30 January 2025.

Paul Cooper
Ombudsman