

## **The complaint**

Mr T complains The Co-operative Bank Plc (“Co-op”) blocked an online transfer he’d made and didn’t contact him to remove it in a timely way.

## **What happened**

Mr T complained to us about a transfer he’d made online from his Co-op account to an account he held at another bank. He was unhappy as he hadn’t been notified by Co-op that the transfer was held by its fraud team for security purposes. He was also unhappy about the amount of time he’d spent on calls trying to resolve this and as he hadn’t received a statement since April 2024. Aside from the customer service Mr T received in the calls, Co-op, after looking into the complaint, didn’t uphold it.

Our investigator didn’t think Mr T had lost out financially by Co-op’s actions or that it acted unreasonably when the transfer was held by their fraud team. She thought it had made reasonable attempts to contact Mr T, so couldn’t agree it needed to compensate Mr T for distress and inconvenience. So, she didn’t uphold the complaint. In respect of the poor service, which Co-op accepted - the length of the call to resolve this and it cutting off 3 times - she thought the £30 and apology Co-op had offered was a fair award and in line with what we’d recommend.

Mr T didn’t agree and reiterated the complaint points he’d made originally. He remained of the view the bank had failed to inform him of the situation by mail, phone or email or by simply returning the money back to the account rather than holding it in limbo and causing him a great deal of anxiety and worry. He asked for an ombudsman to make 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 looked at all the information in this case, I’ve come to the view this isn’t a complaint I can uphold. I’ll explain why.

Banks and building societies have an obligation to try and keep their customers’ accounts safe and prevent them from being victims of fraud and scams. Sometimes they identify and block legitimate payments due to security concerns. This can cause distress and inconvenience to a customer - but it doesn’t necessarily mean they have acted incorrectly.

I don’t think Mr T takes issue with the banks checks and holds. He told us he understands the security implications of an online transfer. But, for the avoidance of any doubt, I’m satisfied the steps Co-op initially took when this transfer was flagged by its fraud prevention measures are in line with those provided for in the terms and conditions of the account, which Mr T agreed to on opening it.

I appreciate the issue for Mr T is he thinks Co-op failed to inform him of the situation by any means, including sending the money back to him. He could see the money had left his Co-

op account but it hadn't arrived at his account with a different bank. But, I'm afraid the records Co-op has sent satisfy me it made reasonable attempts to contact Mr T, in line with their policy. The records show five calls were made to him in less than a 24 hour period beginning at 8.19am on 22 August 2024. It appears Mr T responded to Co-op following the fifth call and the advisor from that call released the payment just over an hour later. I don't find it unreasonable that emails weren't sent as Co-op's policy is to attempt contact by phone first on five instances and then make a final contact usually by email. And that's what it's done here.

I don't find it unreasonable for Co-op to have security controls in place to manage its obligations and to fulfil its duties to customers to ensure each payment made is genuine. And I'm satisfied it's acted in line with its procedures here in trying to protect Mr T's account and it has done so within a reasonable timeframe. So, I'm not upholding the substantive complaint or the concern about delay.

Co-op accept and apologize for the poor service Mr T received when he was on the calls. I think that apology and the £30 compensation is a reasonable reflection for the inconvenience here and the sort of award I'd have made had it not been suggested. So, I'm not going to ask Co-op to do anything further.

In respect of the issue Mr T raised about statements, there's little I can add to the explanation he's already been given by our investigator in her view. The information Co-op have sent about the movements on his account show the statements which have been issued are in line with its policy on monthly statements. So, I'm of the view that Co-op have done nothing wrong on this point either.

I understand Mr T feels strongly about what's happened. But, for the reasons I've explained, I'm not going to uphold this complaint.

### **My final decision**

My final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr T to accept or reject my decision before 24 February 2025.

Annabel O'Sullivan  
**Ombudsman**