

The complaint

Miss C complains that she received poor service from National Westminster Bank Plc when she reported misuse of her credit card. She would like to be paid more compensation.

What happened

Miss C raised a claim with NatWest on 29 July 2024 regarding unauthorised use of her credit card abroad. She said NatWest gave her incorrect information, that it would order her a new card and she would be able to get cash from the branch. She said this was not the case.

Miss C said that NatWest told her she provided conflicting information regarding her claim. She said she had to constantly chase NatWest for an update and complained on 15 August 2024. And said she wasn't given a complaint reference number which meant she had to contact NatWest again. Miss C said NatWest has a flag on her account that states she suffers with poor mental health, but it didn't adjust its approach in order to meet her needs.

Miss C said her mental health was triggered by the rudeness of NatWest's complaints' handler and through its poor customer care and communication. She requested a different complaints' handler and a manager said he would contact her instead of the other colleague, but this didn't happen. Miss C said this left her not wanting to bank with NatWest anymore.

In its response NatWest refunded £63 to Miss C for her fraud claim and issued a new card. NatWest apologised that it hadn't called her back as agreed and that she was misinformed about obtaining cash via her cancelled card. It said Miss C had withdrawn £60 cash in branch soon after, but apologised for queuing time and any rudeness of its branch staff.

NatWest said its agent tried to help Miss C on her call and wasn't rude and Miss C's vulnerabilities were taken into account. NatWest said it had no record of any terminated calls and its complaint reference number isn't generated immediately but was included within its acknowledgement letter. NatWest paid Miss C £75 compensation and £23 for her taxi fare to the branch. NatWest said it would consider refunding charges on her unpaid bills.

Miss C wasn't satisfied and requested more compensation for the effects of what had happened. She said her taxi cost £46 to get to and from NatWest and she had tickets for a trip away which she wasn't able to use. Miss C said the lack of access to cash meant she had defaulted on a pay day loan for which she would like to be compensated.

NatWest paid Miss C further compensation of £51.80, including her call charges, and a further £23 for her return taxi fare. But Miss C wasn't satisfied with this response and referred her complaint to our service.

Our investigator didn't recommend the complaint be upheld. He said NatWest correctly advised Miss C her card would be blocked but didn't call her back as requested. During her next call she was wrongly advised she could access funds and also that her fraud claim had been rejected. He said NatWest had reversed this decision by Miss C's next call.

The investigator said despite mis-advice Miss C was able to obtain cash from her account in branch. And NatWest's agent said her complaint would be logged and an acknowledgement

was sent with the reference number. He said we can't look at NatWest's complaint handling as this falls outside of our rules. He said although NatWest had made errors in dealing with Miss C's fraud claim, these were rectified by its compensation and payment of her claim.

Miss C disagreed with the investigator as she thought NatWest could have done more and she requested an ombudsman review her complaint.

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 was sorry to learn of Miss C's concerns about fraudulent activity on her account and that she felt misinformed and poorly served by NatWest. She said she was left without funds when her card was cancelled and said NatWest didn't adjust its approach in respect of her mental health.

NatWest apologised to Miss C for some service failings but not to the full extent of her complaint. In assessing whether NatWest acted fairly, I've taken into account the relevant rules and guidelines along with good industry practice. However, as our investigator explained, complaint handling isn't a regulated activity and is outside of what we can look at. So I can't consider what Miss C has said about how NatWest handled her complaint.

But I have looked at the service NatWest provided around her fraud claim and the blocking of her card, and its communications. NatWest followed correct procedure to block Miss C's card on her report of fraudulent transactions. This is common practice by banks to protect accounts. And I am pleased that NatWest made a full refund to Miss C in respect of her fraud claim after a very short delay.

Clearly NatWest's agent was incorrect to tell Miss C she could obtain cash using the card that had just been blocked. NatWest's agent wasn't available when Miss C called again but NatWest acted within the required timescale in its communications and responded to Miss C's email contacts. NatWest apologised for misinformation and the lack of call back.

NatWest said there was no agreement with Miss C to allocate her complaint to another member of staff. In any event, NatWest is not required to provide an alternative member of staff at a customer's request. From the call recordings, I think that NatWest's staff tried to help Miss C and I haven't found that there was any failure to adjust the service to meet her mental health needs or vulnerabilities. I also haven't found that NatWest's staff were rude to Miss C during the calls.

I move now to compensation. It's the impact of errors made over and above what we consider to be the normal and expected inconvenience in dealing with a bank that we take into consideration. This will determine if an award of compensation is merited, and if so, how much.

I am sorry to learn that this problem has upset Miss C deeply. I agree that she has been caused some frustration and inconvenience. NatWest has paid Miss C a total of £172.80 compensation for the service issues and costs she incurred. This includes Miss C's travel expenses to and from the branch, and her call costs. It also includes compensation for the lack of call backs, incorrect information and the service provided at its branch.

I agree with the investigator that the compensation paid is a fair and reasonable reflection of the impact on Miss C of the poor service she received from NatWest. NatWest has invited Miss C to provide evidence regarding any further costs for it to consider reimbursement, but

I'm not aware of her providing anything and I find that a further payment in this case is not warranted.

The compensation paid to Miss C is consistent with that paid in respect of the many similar complaints we have seen in respect of distress and inconvenience caused. And it is described within our guidance as fair for, *'repeated small errors or a larger single mistake, requiring a reasonable effort to sort out'*.

Miss C escalated her complaint because she thought NatWest should have done more for her. However, she hasn't responded to the investigator's request to say what more she expected from NatWest, and I agree with the investigator that NatWest has responded fairly and reasonably to her circumstances, and I don't think I can fairly require it to pay Miss C any further compensation.

Our service investigates the merits of complaints on an individual basis. And that is what I've done here. I think it's important to explain that my decision is final. I realise that Miss C will be disappointed by this outcome though I hope she appreciates the reasons why it had to be this way.

My final decision

For the reasons I have given it is my final decision that the complaint is not upheld.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss C to accept or reject my decision before 6 March 2025.

Andrew Fraser
Ombudsman