

The complaint

Mr S has complained that National Westminster Bank plc (“NatWest”) incorrectly removed him as a Premier Banking customer.

What happened

Mr S called NatWest on 16 October 2024 and during that conversation Mr S discovered he didn’t have Premier Banking customer status. Mr S says he was unaware he’d been removed as a Premier Banking customer, so to put things right, NatWest arranged for Mr S to have Premier Banking status.

Unhappy with this, Mr S raised a complaint with NatWest. NatWest issued its final response on 14 December 2024 and upheld the complaint. To put matters right, NatWest paid Mr S £200 compensation for its error.

After Mr S referred his complaint to this service, one of our investigators assessed the complaint, and they didn’t think that NatWest needed to do anything more than it had already done to put matters right. Mr S didn’t accept the investigator’s assessment, so the matter was referred for an ombudsman’s 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 considered everything, I don’t uphold this complaint for broadly the same reasons that the investigator gave.

Firstly, before I address the merits of this complaint, I note that there has been different terminology used. For example, NatWest has previously referred to the status it reserves for high income customers as Premium Banking customers and also Private Banking customers. And more recently it seems (at least going by NatWest’s website) that NatWest now uses the term Premier Banking customer instead. So rather than refer to the different terms, for the sake of consistency, I will refer to the status that Mr S has complained about not having, as a Premier Banking customer within this decision.

Turning now to the matter at hand, Mr S says he was a Premier Banking customer but when he called NatWest in October 2024, he’d discovered that he didn’t have Premier Banking status. As Mr S thought he had Premier Banking status, I can understand that it may’ve come as surprise when he called NatWest and was told that he didn’t.

Looking through everything that has been provided, it’s still not clear to me exactly what has happened here. For example, when we asked for its file, as well as sending information about this complaint, NatWest also provided two responses it’d sent to Mr S in May 2024 in relation to other complaints Mr S had raised. In the first response, dated 4 May 2024, it said:

“I would like to let you know about a few changes to PREMIUM Banking. These changes mean that you will need to make a decision, so please do take the time to

read this. The Private Banking criteria have changed and we now ask our Private customers to have:

- *An income of at least £100,000 paid into a current account with us or*
- *An outstanding mortgage balance of £300,000 or more with us or*
- *At least £100,000 in savings or investments, held with us.*

If you would like to remain in Private Banking service and can meet one of the criteria above, we need you to let us know. Please call us on 0333 202 3330. I can see that your account balance is currently below the limit therefore, your Premium Banking service has been cancelled.”

NatWest then sent Mr S another final response to a complaint on 17 May 2024 which said:

“Furthermore, I would like to inform you that even though you hold a Premier Reward account with us, you are not a premium customer as you do not meet the below criteria and won’t get the other benefits that we provide to our premium customers.

- *Earn a minimum of £100k sole income or £120k joint income paid into your NatWest account.*
- *Have £500k minimum mortgage borrowing with us.*
- *Have £100k minimum savings or investments held with us.”*

So, the two responses to Mr S’s earlier complaints suggest that, even though Mr S had a Premier Reward account, he didn’t have Premier Banking status in May 2024. And this could explain why he didn’t have Premier Banking status in October 2024.

However, I have not been provided with the full details of those earlier complaints. So, I accept it’s possible that since those letters were sent in May 2024, Mr S may’ve contacted NatWest to confirm that he did meet the new eligibility criteria and his Premier Banking status was confirmed as such. But either way, I can see that when Mr S called NatWest in October 2024 and was informed that he didn’t have Premier Banking status, NatWest agreed to ‘reinstate’ his Premier Banking status. As such, even if it was the case that Mr S should’ve had Premier Banking status in October 2024 and the only reason why he didn’t was due to an error made by NatWest, I’m satisfied that NatWest took reasonable steps to put things right for him.

Furthermore, in addition to ‘reinstating’ Mr S’s Premier Banking status in October 2024, when responding to Mr S’s complaint, NatWest also paid Mr S £200 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused. I appreciate that Mr S may not think this amount is enough. For example, Mr S has asked what may’ve happened had he not called up in October 2024 and didn’t find out at that point in time. But looking at everything that did happen, and given how quickly NatWest was able to put things right for Mr S, I think £200 is a fair amount of compensation in the circumstances of this complaint. As such, I don’t think that NatWest needs to do anything more to put things right in relation to this complaint.

My final decision

Because of the reasons given above, I don’t uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I’m required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 25 February 2025.

Thomas White
Ombudsman