

## **The complaint**

Mr S complains about The Co-operative Bank Plc's handling of his chargeback claim.

## **What happened**

In February 2024 Mr S purchased protein powder from a company I'll refer to as P, paying £38.68 using his Co-op debit card.

On delivery Mr S says there was a hole in the packet containing the protein powder, so he contacted P to complain. P didn't agree to refund Mr S, so he contacted Co-op for help.

Mr S says after initially completing Co-Op's online form on 8 July 2024, it cancelled his request, stating he'd not provided supporting evidence.

Unhappy, Mr S emailed Co-op with information relevant to his chargeback claim. He also raised a complaint, in summary saying the process wasn't clear, overly complicated and prevented disputes being raised. He didn't consider it fair his claim had been cancelled or that he'd had to provide evidence separately. In addition, he noted the email address provided by Co-op didn't work.

On 12 July 2024, Co-op applied a temporary credit to Mr S' account of £38.68, raised a chargeback on his behalf and acknowledged his complaint.

Co-op wrote to Mr S again on 24 July 2024, explaining it was still looking into his complaint and apologising for the delay. It said that while it expected to be able to issue its response by 13 August 2024, he had the right to refer his complaint to this Service.

As Mr S hadn't received a response from Co-op by the date given, he contacted our Service to complain. Saying the chargeback process was anti-consumer, overly complicated and the initial form didn't ask him for the evidence needed. As a result, the whole process had been time consuming, stressful and had taken too long to resolve.

While the complaint was with our Service, Co-op wrote to Mr S apologising for how it had handled his chargeback claim. It agreed the process could have been clearer and it should have done more to assist him in making his claim. To apologise it offered and paid Mr S £120.

Separately Co-op confirmed to this Service Mr S had received his money back via the chargeback process.

Mr S didn't consider this resolved matters. He said while he'd now received the £120, he'd not received Co-op's final response letter and questioned if the bank had sent it to his email address, or elsewhere. He also reiterated he'd been inconvenienced in having to repeat the process, as Co-op's processes were unclear.

An Investigator here reviewed matters, but considered Co-op had now fairly resolved Mr S' complaint. In summary they said Mr S had received his funds back via the chargeback

process as P hadn't provided a successful defence. And while they agreed Co-op hadn't adequately supported Mr S, they felt £120 was fair compensation in the circumstances. They later added that although Mr S hadn't received Co-Op's final response letter, it was likely it had been sent.

Mr S didn't agree with our Investigator, saying they hadn't established whether Co-op had correctly sent the final response to him – which he considered to be a potential data breach. As no agreement has been reached, the complaint has been passed to me to decide.

### **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.

In this case, Co-op raised a chargeback, which is a means of asking the merchant (P) for a refund via the card scheme provider, Visa in this case. My understanding is the chargeback was successful, and Mr S has received his money back, namely £38.68, for the protein powder he purchased from P.

As such what's left for me to consider in this decision is Co-op's handling of Mr S' chargeback claim and whether the compensation it's paid is a fair resolution in the circumstances of this complaint.

Here, Co-op initially cancelled Mr S' request to raise a chargeback – saying he'd not provided evidence. Mr S disputed this, as he didn't consider he'd been given the opportunity to provide the information – which would have been understandably frustrating.

However, once Mr S notified Co-op of the problem, and provided evidence, it did as I'd expect and raised the chargeback on 12 July 2024 - around four days after he'd initially contacted it. The same day it credited his account with £38.68 and sent him a letter confirming this. While there were problems initially, including providing Mr S an incorrect email address, Co-op acted swiftly in processing Mr S' chargeback, which meant further delays weren't caused and he received the funds within a matter of days.

Co-op has accepted its chargeback process could have been clearer and it's apologised for the inconvenience Mr S was caused as a result. While I can't tell a business how it's systems should work, as our Service isn't the regulator, I can consider any impact it's had on Mr S. Here, Mr S was caused some inconvenience by having to repeat the claim process, I'm pleased to see he received the funds quickly after this issue was resolved, so I've taken this into account when considering what fair compensation looks like.

Mr S is also unhappy with Co-op's handling of his complaint – among other issues he's said he didn't receive a copy of its final response until it was provided by this Service. He's also since raised concerns it was sent to the wrong email address, constituting a data breach.

Co-op acknowledged it took longer than it should have to respond. However I've seen it wrote to Mr S on 24 July 2024, apologising for the delay and referring him to this Service while it continued its review. So from this point, Mr S was able to raise matters with this Service, preventing further delays, which he did. Co-op's final response, issued on 27 September 2024, after he'd raised the matter with this Service, apologised for the delays and for the issues Mr S experienced when raising his chargeback. To put things right Co-op paid Mr S £120, which he confirmed he received.

As our Investigator has explained, Co-op hasn't been able to confirm the final response was sent to him by email on 27 September 2024. Based on what I've seen however, Co-op hold

the correct email for Mr S, and the same as our service hold – this is noted on the top of the final response letter. Co-op had also previously sent a number of emails to Mr S, which he did receive. And while Co-op can't confirm an email was sent, I've seen nothing to suggest this was sent to any other party.

While I appreciate it was frustrating for Mr S not to receive Co-op's final response initially, I don't think he's lost out as a result. I say this because Mr S had already raised his complaint with this Service, the compensation payment from Co-op appears to have been paid shortly after the final response was issued and he's now been provided a copy.

I can understand Mr S' frustration as the chargeback process took longer than it should, and he was put to some inconvenience in having provide information again. But I'm pleased to see once Co-op received the details it needed, it processed matters quickly. It's also disappointing it took Co-op several months to deal with his complaint. But taking everything into account, I think the payment of £120 that Co-op has already paid is sufficient to apologise for the delays and inconvenience caused. So, I won't be asking it do anything further.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons explained 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 24 June 2025.

Victoria Cheyne  
**Ombudsman**