

The complaint

Ms K complains about what happened when she went to a branch, and asked National Westminster Bank Plc to transfer a large amount of money out of her account, to her solicitors. Ms K said she had her passport and other ID, but NatWest wouldn't accept it.

What happened

Ms K wanted to make a sizeable transfer from her account with NatWest to her solicitors, in order to complete a property purchase. She didn't have a bank card for the account, because NatWest doesn't reissue cards after they expire unless the previous card had been used recently, and Ms K hadn't done that. She has another account elsewhere, and had been using this account to gather funds together for her purchase. But Ms K said she had a number of ways of proving her ID. So she went to a NatWest branch, with her passport. NatWest wouldn't allow her to move her money.

Ms K told us she didn't understand why NatWest wouldn't allow her to move her funds, or accept any of the other ID she offered it. She said this was both upsetting and inconvenient, leaving her having to rearrange things for her purchase.

NatWest wrote to Ms K to say that if she didn't have a card, then she had to present one item from a list of acceptable ID documents. It said it had refused to make this transfer because Ms K didn't have that document. It said its staff had been polite and respectful throughout her visit, and it had now ordered a new debit card for her, for this account.

When Ms K repeated her complaint, NatWest wrote again, this time saying she had needed two ID documents from the list. And it couldn't accept any of the alternative forms of ID that Ms K had offered.

Our investigator didn't think this complaint should be upheld, because NatWest had followed its own internal processes here.

Ms K disagreed. She said she thought she'd made reasonable and proportional suggestions for how to move things forward, but NatWest ignored those. She questioned whether NatWest should be refusing to accept any digital forms of ID, when so many forms of ID are digital only, and said she'd also suggested physical ID from her other bank, but without success. She said that the staff member had clearly evidenced her ID with her passport so there was no doubt as to her identity.

Ms K wanted her complaint to be considered by an ombudsman, so it was passed to me for a final decision. And I then reached my provisional decision on this case.

My provisional decision

I issued a provisional decision on this complaint and explained why I did propose to uphold it. This is what I said then:

When this complaint came to me, I noted that Ms K said she'd offered a variety of

documents as proof of her ID, but NatWest had said that none of these featured on its (quite short) list of acceptable ID documents. I also noted that Ms K said she had offered to verify herself using her UK Government eVisa account, which replaces the previous system of biometric residence permits.

NatWest would have accepted a biometric residence permit if Ms K still had one of those, but it would not accept ID verification through the replacement eVisa system.

I asked NatWest why this was the case, and it said it didn't think the eVisa system had yet been introduced at the time that Ms K tried to make this withdrawal. I have pointed NatWest to the relevant information on the eVisa system, which says that's not right. So I asked again about why NatWest seemed to have made a decision based on an out of date list of ID documents.

In its latest response to our service, NatWest says the main reason for its decision to refuse to make this transfer for Ms K was *"due to the member of staff not comfortable in making the payment for that amount."* It said this refusal didn't happen because NatWest hasn't yet updated its list of acceptable ID. It insisted *"the sole reason for declining was nothing to do with the biometrics Evisa argument at all its as explained the member of staff was not comfortable to pay away funds to the amount."*

NatWest has previously explained to Ms K in some detail, twice, that it refused to make this payment because she didn't have the required ID. And I've seen nothing to make me think that NatWest also had concerns about a transfer to Ms K's solicitors at the time the request was made. So I don't think it's likely that NatWest had a different reason for refusing this payment at the time, and hasn't mentioned that at all until now.

I do think Ms K was refused this payment on the basis that she didn't have the required ID. And it also appears as if NatWest's staff member reached that decision to decline payment on the basis of a list of acceptable ID which was out of date at the time Ms K requested this transfer. I should say I don't think this is the direct fault of the individual members of staff involved, who were operating under NatWest's existing guidance which didn't appear to offer much in the way of discretion. But it is difficult to see overall, how the decision reached by NatWest was fair and reasonable in this case.

So I need to think about what NatWest should do, to put things right.

I asked Ms K whether she could show us evidence of any direct costs to her of this payment being refused on 11 October 2024. Ms K sent us some details of her first mortgage payment, and a bank transfer, but hasn't shown that these costs were only incurred because the payment to her solicitors was delayed. So I haven't been able to see that this declined payment did cause Ms K any direct costs, although it certainly resulted in inconvenience to her. We know this payment was made a few days later. I must also bear in mind that it is possible that if NatWest had investigated further on Ms K's branch visit, it may still have made a fair and reasonable decision not to make this payment for Ms K. So I don't think NatWest has to make a payment to Ms K in respect of any extra purchase expenses this problem caused.

That said, I do think Ms K was inconvenienced here, and that this added to what was already a stressful time, trying to complete a property purchase. So I think that NatWest should pay Ms K £250 in compensation. I think that would provide a fair and reasonable outcome to this complaint.

I invited the parties to make any final points, if they wanted, before issuing my final decision. Both sides replied.

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.

NatWest said it had nothing to add, and it was happy to accept my decision. Ms K resent a notification from her mortgage lender, which said she'd be required to make a larger payment as her first monthly mortgage payment, in November. Ms K said this additional part interest mortgage payment was added for the period including 12 to 19 October, as indicated in this letter.

Ms K's letter doesn't appear to me to confirm that the part interest payment added to her first mortgage payment to cover lending in October, also covered a period of delay caused by NatWest refusing to forward Ms K's funds on 11 October 2024. And I note that Ms K has told us she was forwarding funds to her solicitor, in order to buy the property. It would be unusual for Ms K's solicitor to have requested the release of mortgage funds before that solicitor had received her deposit. So I'm not able to conclude that this is what's most likely to have occurred in this case.

I should also say that even if I had been able to conclude that the additional interest Ms K showed us, covered a period of delay caused when NatWest didn't make a transfer on 11 October, I would still say that it is still possible that if NatWest had investigated this payment further on Ms K's branch visit, it may still have made a fair and reasonable decision not to make the transfer for Ms K. So I don't think NatWest has to make a payment to Ms K in respect of the mortgage interest that her lender included in her first monthly payment.

For the above reasons, I haven't changed my mind. I'll now make the decision I originally proposed.

My final decision

My final decision is that National Westminster Bank Plc must pay Ms K £250.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms K to accept or reject my decision before 25 February 2025.

Esther Absalom-Gough

Ombudsman