

The complaint

Mr S is unhappy with HSBC UK Bank Plc. Mr S wanted to transfer some money abroad and when he visited his branch a staff member recommended he open a Global Money Transfer account (GMA). The transfer didn't go through, and Mr S ended up using his original account to complete the transfer.

What happened

Mr S said he had no intention of opening a new account. He was just going to use his normal account to transfer the money. But branch staff told him he would get a preferential exchange rate. The transfer didn't go through, and Mr S said it took six days for the money to end up back in his account. So, in view of the problem Mr S reverted to his original account, transferred the funds from there and the payment went through within 12 hours.

Mr S said the exchange rate was lower when the transfer did go through, and this meant he lost money due to the delay.

HSBC originally said the payment didn't go through as there was *"no credit account available."* It said the receiving bank wasn't able to accept the money in British currency (GBP). But Mr S pointed out that through his normal account this was also done in GBP with no issues.

HSBC said in its final response that the first attempted payment was made at 12:11pm and returned at 12:42pm on the same day. It said Mr S should check the currency details with the receiving bank before proceeding any further. HSBC apologised but said it made no errors.

Mr S brought his complaint to this service.

Our investigator didn't uphold it. Initially HSBC didn't check with the branch staff to find out what happened when Mr S visited the branch. But when it did HSBC uncovered that the real reason for the transfer problem was because an incorrect Bank Identifier Code (BIC) was entered as part of the first payment request. Our investigator accepted that despite being in branch Mr S completed the transfer via his banking app himself and so HSBC couldn't be held responsible. She said HSBC didn't need to do anything more.

Mr S didn't accept this and asked for his complaint to be passed to an ombudsman for 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.

There are no records to show a gap of six days between the first attempted transfer leaving Mr S's account and returning. In evidence HSBC said, *"Funds not held at any point by HSBC as payment was reversed almost immediately."*

The HSBC bank statement I've seen in evidence dated 17 October 2024 to 16 November 2024 shows the money leaving Mr S's account and being transferred back into his account on the same day. Based on the paper evidence the statement concurs with the details provided by HSBC that the money was back in Mr S's account around half an hour after the attempted transfer.

HSBC provided details showing the BIC input by Mr S when he used the Global Money Account was incorrect. It said there was *"no Intermediary's published in Bank Check for the BIC. Therefore, the payment was returned with the explanation - No credit account available in instruction currency GBP."* It said when Mr S went back to his original account, he input the correct BIC which allowed the transfer to go through correctly on that second occasion. The records show a different BIC was used on the second successful transfer attempt.

This evidence seems to agree with Mr S's evidence from his local contact at the bank abroad who told him the first attempt at the transfer never reached the other bank.

Both times these actions were taken in branch by Mr S on his app with HSBC staff supporting. The staff member recollections agree with this and confirm the second staff member also helped Mr S set up his initial complaint. But that doesn't mean I can find HSBC responsible for the transfer error. It was Mr S using the app on his phone that sent the transfer.

As Mr S used his app on both occasions I accept that HSBC didn't make any errors around the transfer payment. The incorrect BIC led to the first attempt being returned. So, I can't say the problem was caused by the new GMA account either. The transfer went through when the original account was used because at the second attempt the correct BIC was used.

In view of this I can't say that the change in exchange rates between Mr S first attempted payment and when the second payment went through is anything I can blame HSBC for. Records show the money was back in the account on the same day so further action could be taken to attempt transfer again from that point.

So, I don't think HSBC acted unfairly or unreasonably here.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

I make no award against HSBC UK Bank Plc.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 16 April 2025.

John Quinlan
Ombudsman