

The complaint

Mr R complains about the service he received from Bank of Scotland plc trading as Halifax ("Halifax"), when he called it about transactions it had blocked.

What happened

I'll provide a summary of events below.

Mr R holds an account with Halifax. He used his debit card to make transactions to another business for the purchase of cryptocurrency. The transactions weren't approved by Halifax, and it blocked the account, after its fraud prevention systems flagged them for additional checks.

Mr R didn't hear anything from Halifax about this. So, he called to understand what had happened and spent over an hour on the phone waiting and being passed between departments, before managing to speak to someone who was able to complete the checks and remove the block.

Mr R complained to Halifax about this, saying that as well as the emotional stress caused, he'd lost the opportunity to buy cryptocurrency at a specific point, which would have made him a profit. And this was all because of its inaction and delays. Halifax issued a response. In brief, it explained why it may block an account and need to speak to a customer. But recognised, the service Mr R had received on this occasion had fallen short, in the time taken to speak to the correct team. To say sorry and recognise the trouble and upset, it paid £25 and another £24 to cover the cost of the calls. It also acknowledged Mr R was unhappy that he'd had to provide his driving licence for verification, but explained this was a new process.

Mr R didn't think the bank's response went far enough in recognising the distress and inconvenience he'd been put to and the financial impact, so he asked us to take a look. One of our investigators reviewed the case, but she ultimately decided that what the bank had responded with was a fair resolution. This was because Halifax had removed the block on the same day that Mr R had contacted it, and there wasn't any tangible evidence to support the financial loss, beyond the cost of calls.

Mr R didn't agree. He referred to the awards our service can make for impact and didn't think £49 was proportionate for the impact on him. And he reiterated he had a claim for lost investment, because whilst he no longer had access to transaction records for that, the loss was reasonably foreseeable and should be met by the bank.

When the investigator didn't change her mind, the case was put forward for a decision, in line with the second and final stage of our process.

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've looked at what happened, and I'm satisfied Halifax's resolution was a fair way to resolve the complaint.

All of us will experience a degree of inconvenience when a payment is blocked, and the bank needs to verify a transaction. With the prevalence of fraud, this isn't uncommon.

Of course, here, the inconvenience clearly went beyond what one expects but Halifax has recognised Mr R shouldn't have needed to wait as long as he did, and it should have handled things better. It has paid £25 for his trouble and upset, £24 to cover the calls and its apologised.

I appreciate Mr R would like more compensation, but I don't think there's a reasonable case for me to require that, when considering the overall timeline of events, noting that the block was removed the same day and the fact that there's nothing to support the claim for financial loss. I appreciate Mr R won't see it this way, but I hope it helps him to know that the case has been considered afresh. It follows that I won't be asking Halifax to do any more to resolve this complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 28 April 2025.

Sarita Taylor
Ombudsman