

## **The complaint**

Ms M complains about how NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY (NatWest) deal with the issue of an old rediscovered cheque.

## **What happened**

Prior to 2001 Ms M held an investment with NatWest.

In January 2001 NatWest wrote to Ms M providing a cheque for the proceeds of the investment.

In early 2024 Ms M found the uncashed cheque in some paperwork and approached NatWest to check if it had been deposited or cashed.

After some time and an investigation of old records NatWest said the cheque hadn't been cashed. They also paid £100 for the customer service provided and inconvenience caused while they looked through their records for the cheque.

Ms M was unhappy with the outcome so one of our Investigators looked into what happened and thought NatWest wasn't at fault that the cheque wasn't cashed. They said NatWest hadn't done anything wrong by not taking any action at the time to see if the cheque had been cashed. Our Investigator agreed that £100 was a reasonable amount to make up for any mistakes NatWest made when looking in their records for the cheque and when dealing with Ms M.

Ms M remained unhappy saying the impact of inflation on the amount of the cheque hadn't been taken into account.

Because an agreement couldn't be reached the matter has come to me for a 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.

Ms M has provided a lot of information about her complaint and it's clear to me how strongly she feels about what happened. I want to assure Ms M that I've read and considered everything that has been provided even if I don't mention it all in detail. I've summarised some things which reflects the informal nature of our service.

NatWest sent Ms M the cheque in 2001 and it was rediscovered in 2024; over some 20 years later.

Businesses aren't expected to keep records forever and it's usual for records to be destroyed much sooner than 20 years. In situations like this it's not unusual for there to be no record of what happened as the information has been legitimately destroyed over the passage of time.

NatWest went to quite some effort tracing the cheque as they explained in their final response letter from 20 December 2024. Several departments were involved as well as contacting another business related to the original investment and searching records of a bank branch which had closed some time ago.

In the final response letter NatWest said that it was to their *surprise* that a record of the cheque had been located. And I agree that it is a surprise to find the records after over 20 years. And I'm glad to hear that the record was found, and it was confirmed that the cheque hadn't been cashed. It's a common occurrence that no records are found after such a long time and in those cases the outcome is usually different to what happened here.

Ms M says that NatWest should've done more to chase her up when they saw that the cheque hadn't been cashed. I can see why she feels this way however there isn't any requirement saying this type of reconciliation must be done by businesses. And indeed it isn't a common business practice mostly due to the volumes of cheques issued by large organisations.

When dealing with NatWest Ms M was put to some trouble having to make contact several times and also being incorrectly redirected to another business. I think the £100 NatWest have paid is a fair payment for the inconvenience caused.

Having carefully considered everything that happened I'm satisfied NatWest have acted fairly and reasonably so I won't be asking them to take any further action.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons I've explained above, my decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms M to accept or reject my decision before 23 May 2025.

Warren Wilson  
**Ombudsman**