

The complaint

Mr H complains that Nationwide Building Society acted unfairly when it asked him for information about his circumstances.

What happened

Around the end of 2024, Nationwide contacted Mr H asking for more information about his circumstances. Mr H complained because he found questions about his employment and salary to be intrusive. He feels Nationwide is accusing him because the firm made reference to its obligation to prevent money laundering. Mr H says Nationwide notified him in January that he needed to respond by 12 February, otherwise his access to the banking app would be restricted.

Mr H says he was advised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) that it hadn't given any specific directions to Nationwide to ask such questions. In its response, Nationwide explained it had acted in line with its regulatory obligations.

Remaining unhappy, Mr H referred his complaint to this service. He's unhappy he wasn't given an acceptable explanation for why Nationwide was asking for personal information, so he doesn't feel it's appropriate to share such detail without just cause. Our investigator concluded that Nationwide has acted fairly. Mr H didn't agree and asked for a final decision, so the complaint has been passed to me.

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.

As our investigator said, Nationwide has important legal and regulatory responsibilities to meet when providing accounts to customers. Those obligations are ongoing and don't only apply when an account is opened. They can broadly be summarised as a responsibility to know its customers, monitor accounts, verify the source and purpose of the funds as well as detect and prevent financial harm.

Nationwide may need to review accounts and ask for information to comply with these responsibilities. I've considered the basis for Nationwide's review, which I find was legitimate and in line with its legal and regulatory obligations.

Mr H's concern is that the questions Nationwide asked of him were intrusive because he was asked for information he considers to be personal, and not for sharing without just cause. I understand his perspective on this point as, typically, he wouldn't be expected to share this with individuals or firms he doesn't think should have access to such information.

However, Nationwide has shared details about its process and the questions it asks customers when carrying out its regulatory obligations. These questions include (among other things) requesting information about employment and salary. I'm satisfied this is part of Nationwide's commercial practices, which isn't something I can change or interfere with. So I

think it was reasonable for Nationwide to ask these questions as part of its checks. Although Mr H disagrees, I won't be asking Nationwide to take any action despite his dissatisfaction.

Mr H references interaction he had with the FCA around the time, suggesting he was advised that the regulator hadn't directed Nationwide to ask him questions in the way that it did. I've seen a copy of the email that was sent to Mr H from the FCA, but I don't agree with Mr H's position on what he was advised.

The email from the FCA seems to summarise my own conclusions on Nationwide's actions – in that it has certain legal and regulatory obligations, but its Nationwide's commercial decision on the processes it puts in place when carrying out such obligations. The firm's processes may differ from other financial institutions, but as long as Mr H isn't treated unfairly, this service wouldn't find that Nationwide has done something wrong. And as I've already said, I'm satisfied Nationwide's actions were fair.

Nationwide's terms and conditions explain that it can ask for information in line with the questions it asked Mr H. The terms also explain that the firm can put in place limitations on the account if such questions aren't responded to. Given Mr H doesn't seem to have provided the information Nationwide asked for, I'm satisfied the firm acted fairly by restricting his access to mobile banking. Nationwide has advised us that it hasn't applied any further restrictions on Mr H's account.

Mr H feels as though he was accused of money laundering because of the firm's reference to this topic. I've reviewed the communications from Nationwide, including the call he had with the firm in December. I'm not persuaded that Mr H was accused of money laundering. The reference to this phrase seems to be part of the firm's explanation that its process in asking for the information that it did, is with a view to prevent crime - such as money laundering. So I don't agree that such an accusation was made.

In summary, I don't find that Nationwide acted unreasonably by asking the questions that it did. So I won't be asking the firm to do anything more in relation to this complaint.

My final decision

For the reasons explained, I'm not upholding this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 17 October 2025.

Abdul Ali
Ombudsman