

## **The complaint**

Mr R complains that National Westminster Bank Public Limited Company (NatWest) unfairly closed his accounts.

## **What happened**

In April, NatWest wrote to Mr R advising that his accounts would be closed with immediate effect. The letter explained how Mr R can arrange to have his funds returned and that it could take up to 60 days for the bank to do so. Mr R complained because he thinks the closure decision was unfair and because he was left without access to his funds.

In its response, NatWest explained it had acted in accordance with its terms. The bank apologised for any distress caused to Mr R and reiterated that it could take up to 60 days for his funds to be returned.

Remaining unhappy, Mr R asked this service to independently review his complaint. He says he was left without access to his salary and savings and couldn't pay for essential living costs – including supporting a vulnerable family member. Mr R adds he was unable to travel abroad after experiencing a bereavement because he couldn't access his funds. Although Mr R has since confirmed his funds have been returned to him, he still wants his account reopened. Mr R also wants NatWest to explain why it closed his account, and he points to an adverse CIFAS marker as being the possible cause of this.

Our investigator issued their outcome, explaining that the bank had acted fairly. Mr R doesn't agree so the complaint has been passed to me to decide.

## **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 decided that NatWest has acted fairly – I'll explain why.

Banks that operate in the UK (including NatWest) are required to carry out specific actions to meet their legal and regulatory obligations. This includes the requirement for banks to complete ongoing monitoring of existing business relationships. And that sometimes results in banks deciding to restrict or - in some instances - close customer accounts.

NatWest has provided me with information to show why it reviewed Mr R's accounts. Having considered this, I'm satisfied the bank acted in line with its regulatory obligations.

NatWest is entitled to close an account. However, in doing so, it must ensure it complies with the terms and conditions of the account. The terms of the account say that NatWest can close Mr R's accounts by giving him at least two months' notice. In certain circumstances, the bank can also close an account immediately – which is what happened here.

Based on the information I've seen, I'm satisfied that NatWest acted fairly and in line with its terms and conditions when doing so. I understand Mr R's concern, given he would like to

know why NatWest closed his accounts. But the bank is under no obligation to explain why it made this decision.

It's important that I point out that our rules allow us to receive evidence in confidence. We may treat evidence from banks as confidential for several reasons – for example, if it contains security information, or commercially sensitive information. Some of the information NatWest has provided is information I consider should be kept confidential.

Mr R thinks NatWest's decision was because of an adverse CIFAS marker recorded by a third-party firm under Mr R's name. I can understand why Mr R believes this to be the case. But given what I've said above, it's not something I'm able to validate.

Mr R is unhappy he was left without access to his funds. I can see NatWest issued its closure letter on 8 April and Mr R submitted the required funds release form the next day. NatWest says his funds were returned to him on 29 April, which is within the bank's 60-day timescale. I appreciate it would've been challenging for Mr R to be without his funds. However, looking at his account statements, I can see his account was mainly funded by third-party transfers and transfers from Mr R's other accounts. So I'm satisfied that Mr R had adequate banking facilities in place elsewhere.

Moreover, I can only consider the detrimental impact of the bank's actions and how to remedy this, only if I determine that NatWest acted unfairly. As explained, I don't think that it did. So I won't be considering an award for the distress and inconvenience Mr R says he experienced.

Overall, I'm satisfied NatWest has acted fairly here so I won't be asking it to do anything else regarding 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 R to accept or reject my decision before 15 August 2025.

Abdul Ali  
**Ombudsman**