

The complaint

Mr D complains about the service provided by National Westminster Bank Public Limited Company ('NatWest') in relation to his MyRewards account and stocks and shares ISA.

What happened

The history to this complaint is well known to the parties, so I won't repeat all the details here. In brief, Mr D raised a complaint that he was unable to obtain funds he accrued in his MyRewards account. He was also unhappy with his stocks and shares ISA saying that he was unable to close the account, that NatWest continued to apply fees in an attempt to clawback funds and that NatWest's agent failed to respond to him despite his request. Lastly, he found NatWest's digital chatbot, CORA unfit for purpose and stress inducing.

NatWest looked into Mr D's concerns. Whilst it acknowledged there was a slight shortfall in service by its agent and provided an apology for this, overall, it thought it hadn't done much wrong. Unhappy with this, Mr D referred the matter to this Service.

Our investigator looked into Mr D's concerns but didn't uphold the complaint. He accepted Mr D had been caused a minor inconvenience when the agent didn't respond to an email but he wasn't satisfied that this merited compensation.

As Mr D disagreed, the matter was 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.

Having done so, I'm not intending to uphold Mr D's complaint for broadly the same reasons as the investigator. I'll explain why, but before I do, I'm aware Mr D thinks our case handler has shown bias towards NatWest. It may be helpful to note this service is impartial between, and independent from, consumers and businesses. What this means is that we don't represent either party. We're required to assess all of the evidence from all the parties. Insofar as the investigator didn't agree with Mr D's view of the complaint, that wasn't indicative of bias, however unwelcome Mr D may have found his conclusions.

MyRewards balance

Mr D has complained that his rewards balance is missing from his NatWest Rewards account. NatWest explained that when Mr D closed his Rewards account, any accumulated balance was frozen in accordance with the terms and conditions he agreed to when opening the account.

I have reviewed the relevant terms and conditions. The investigator has previously quoted this so I won't repeat them again, but I'm satisfied the terms say that residual balances would not be automatically transferred when an account is closed. Instead, Mr D would have needed to contact the MyRewards team directly to request the transfer of his balance.

From the evidence available, I have not seen that Mr D contacted NatWest about his rewards balance before he raised the matter through NatWest's CORA system and subsequently with the complaints team. While I understand Mr D feels strongly about this issue, I cannot reasonably conclude that NatWest acted incorrectly by not automatically transferring the balance, given that the terms required him to make a specific request.

I note that following Mr D's complaint, NatWest confirmed in its response dated May 2025 that it had arranged for the accrued amount of £20.12 to be transferred to him which represents a fair resolution to the matter.

Stocks and Shares ISA

Mr D has raised several concerns about his Stocks and Shares ISA with NatWest, including:

- difficulties getting a response from customer service when trying to close his ISA
- ongoing fees charged to the account
- his view that the account was a waste of time

From what I understand, Mr D was unable to withdraw his full balance because he entered a specific value rather than selecting the "withdraw all" option. I appreciate this would have been frustrating, and in such circumstances, I would expect NatWest to provide reasonable assistance.

The records show that Mr D contacted NatWest's customer service on 4 March 2025. In his email, he explained that he could not be contacted by phone due to work commitments but was available via email or through the app's messaging function. NatWest's agent acknowledged Mr D's query the following morning and provided the information he requested. The agent's response included clear steps explaining how Mr D could withdraw funds from and close his ISA. This response was sent the very next morning Mr D made contact, which to my mind, demonstrates that NatWest handled the initial query both fairly and promptly.

However, I note that despite Mr D stating he was not available by phone, the agent asked him to call. Further, the agent did not send respond to Mr D's last message requesting an email. NatWest has subsequently, sold the units Mr D held and transferred the balance of £99.84 to his new account, but it has acknowledged that it should have followed up by email as Mr D requested, and has apologised for this shortfall.

I understand Mr D believes he should receive compensation. However, the initial issue arose because Mr D did not select the correct withdrawal option. While NatWest could have provided better follow-up communication, it did supply all the necessary information to resolve the matter when Mr D first raised it. In these circumstances, I consider NatWest's apology to be a sufficient response, so I do not find that compensation is warranted.

Moving to Mr D's concerns that the account was a waste of time and that fees were applied so that NatWest could *"clawback my money when I tried to close them and be obstructive about moving my money in a blatant attempt to try and keep hold of them"*, I note that the investigator has confirmed the account was opened on a non-advised basis. Importantly, this means that the responsibility for understanding the ISA ultimately resides with the customer opening the account, with NatWest's role being one of information provision – which I'm satisfied that it did here.

It also must be noted that any fees that NatWest was entitled to apply were listed in the product literature and as Mr D didn't close the account properly, for the period it remained live, NatWest was entitled to apply fees in line with the terms of the account terms.

CORA

Mr D is clearly unhappy with NatWest's digital chatbot, CORA, and has raised concerns both in 2024 and earlier this year. As both NatWest and the investigator explain, CORA is designed to assist customers with a range of queries and frequently asked questions, but it cannot handle all customer needs.

I can sympathise with how frustrating it can be to not be able to be stuck with a digital chatbot and not be able to reach the right person to have your concerns answered. I can see Mr D feels strongly about this given the obstacles he faced in progressing his concerns via CORA. I also appreciate Mr D has a demanding job and it would be difficult for him to find the time. But I've got to decide the evidence before me. And I'm afraid as frustrating as it may be, CORA is simply a chatbot designed to provide guidance to NatWest customers and connect them with agents when needed. I understand Mr D would rather not use CORA so I'm pleased to see NatWest has explained how he can bypass the digital chatbot and speak to an agent directly going forward.

I don't take lightly the frustration Mr D has communicated with our Service but for the reasons I've explained above, I'm satisfied that NatWest isn't required to do anything more to remedy the situation. I anticipate my answer will come as a disappointment to Mr D but I hope that setting out why I've reached the answer that I have reassures him that I have reviewed his complaint with full consideration.

My final decision

I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D to accept or reject my decision before 1 December 2025.

Farzana Miah
Ombudsman