

The complaint

Ms L complains that Nationwide Building Society didn't give her the offered payment of £175 when she switched her account.

What happened

Ms L explains that she applied to switch her account to Nationwide on 8 January 2025. She set a switch date of 5 February 2025. She says that she didn't realise that to qualify for the payment she had to use her debit card within 31 days of the switch request rather than the switch date. Ms L also says that a standing order ought to qualify her for the offer as it's a 'recurring payment.' And thinks that the terms and conditions were hard to follow.

Nationwide didn't accept that it had made a mistake. It told this service that Ms L hadn't been in contact with it about the switch before her online request. The account had been opened and a card issued on the date the switch was requested. And Ms L hadn't qualified for the incentive payment as she hadn't used the debit card within 31 days of the switch request. It said she'd told it that she'd been on holiday at the time of the actual switch and hadn't taken her card with her. Nationwide said that the terms and conditions of the switch offer set out the requirements to qualify and Ms L had accepted misreading them. Those terms and conditions set out that a standing order wouldn't qualify as a card payment. Nationwide said it had offered Ms L £25 as a gesture of goodwill in light of what happened but she didn't accept this.

Our investigator didn't recommend that the complaint be upheld. She said that in her view the terms and conditions of the switching offer were clear. Ms L hadn't met all the requirements. And the terms and conditions had stated that an eligible debit card payment needed to be made within 31 days of the switch request.

Ms L didn't agree and wanted her complaint to be reviewed by an ombudsman. She said that she'd been treated unfairly and would have accepted £100 in compensation. Ms L said that the terms and conditions might be clear to a financially sophisticated investigator but not to her as an 'ordinary pensioner.' And that we hadn't correctly applied the consumer understanding outcome of the Consumer Duty. She also said that she misread the term about use of the debit card and that it didn't occur to her that a reputable business would do something so unfair. She'd followed guidance not to set a switch date close to when payments were due. And that she hadn't been told that this would leave her only a few days to qualify for the offer and she should have been alerted to this. Ms L said she also didn't understand the difference between standing orders and recurring payments using a debit card as both directly come from her account. So, a standing order payment ought to have qualified too.

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 L clearly switched her account with the expectation of receiving a payment. I need to decide whether Nationwide is fairly responsible for her not qualifying.

Ms L has accepted that she misread the terms and conditions. And stated in an email to this service that *'the debit card condition was clear on a close reading.'* I also asked our investigator to clarify with Nationwide when Ms L made an otherwise eligible qualifying debit card payment. It said that this was on 27 May 2025. I note for example that the terms and conditions exclude certain debit card payment such as gambling and cashpoint withdrawals. The position is that Ms L hadn't in any event made a debit card payment that would have otherwise qualified even by 8 March 2025, which was 31 days after the switch itself.

The terms and conditions of the offer state that a qualifying debit card payment can include *'recurring card payments.'* I appreciate that standing orders and direct debits are recurring payments but these aren't originated using a debit card and so don't qualify. So, I don't think Nationwide is responsible for any confusion on the part of Ms L here. And I note that these different types of payments were further defined in detail if needed at page 3 of the switching offer terms and conditions.

Ms L is generally unhappy with the terms for payment of the offer. Nationwide's position is that she had a card after the account was opened and could also have used her account and card before the switch. I think it was fairly her decision when the switch took place accepting, she timed this around her payments.

I've taken into account the Consumer Duty outcome of consumer understanding and which builds on existing regulatory obligations for Nationwide to communicate in a way that is clear, fair, and not misleading. I'm satisfied that Nationwide provided Ms L with the information she needed to make an informed decision about the switch offer. It has no record of her asking for clarification. Ms L has accepted she misread those terms and that her misunderstanding was in part due to what she believed ought to have been the terms – not what they were. I don't think Nationwide is reasonably responsible for that.

I can appreciate Ms L's frustration at not receiving the payment. But for the reasons I've given I don't consider Nationwide has made a mistake or acted unfairly. It has made a goodwill offer of £25 to settle the complaint which remains open to Ms L if she contacts it.

My final decision

My decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

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

Michael Crewe
Ombudsman