

Complaint

Mr S has complained about a credit card Capital One (Europe) plc (“Capital One”) provided to him.

He says that he shouldn’t have been given the credit card and that it was irresponsibly provided to him.

Background

In January 2021, Capital One provided Mr S with a credit card which had a limit of £1,500.00. Mr S wasn’t provided with any credit limit increases.

One of our investigators reviewed what Mr S and Capital One had told us. And he thought that Capital One hadn’t done anything wrong or treated Mr S unfairly when providing the credit card.

So he didn’t recommend that Mr S’ complaint be upheld. Mr S disagreed and asked for an ombudsman to look at the complaint.

My findings

I’ve considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what’s fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Having carefully considered everything, I’ve decided not to uphold Mr S’ complaint. I’ll explain why in a little more detail.

We’ve explained how we handle complaints about unaffordable and irresponsible lending on our website. And I’ve used this approach to help me decide Mr S’ complaint.

Capital One needed to make sure it didn’t lend irresponsibly. In practice, what this means is Capital One needed to carry out proportionate checks to be able to understand whether Mr S could afford to repay any credit it provided.

Our website sets out what we typically think about when deciding whether a lender’s checks were proportionate. Generally, we don’t think that it is necessarily unreasonable for a lender’s checks to be less detailed – in terms of how much information it gathers and what it does to verify it – in the early stages of a lending relationship.

But we might think it needed to do more if, for example, a borrower’s income was low or the amount lent was high. And the longer the lending relationship goes on, the greater the risk of it becoming unsustainable and the borrower experiencing financial difficulty. So we’d expect a lender to be able to show that it didn’t continue to lend to a customer irresponsibly.

Capital One says it agreed to Mr S’ application after it obtained information on his income and carried out a credit search on him. And the information it obtained indicated that Mr S

would be able to make, what it considered to be, the not especially large monthly repayment required to clear the balance that could be owed within a reasonable period of time.

On the other hand, Mr S says that he shouldn't have been lent to.

I've considered what the parties have said.

What's important to note is that Mr S was provided with a revolving credit facility rather than a loan. And this means that Capital One was required to understand whether a credit limit of £1,500.00 could be repaid within a reasonable period of time, rather than in one go. I think it's fair to say that a credit limit of £1,500.00 did not require large monthly payments in order to clear the full amount that could be owed within a reasonable period of time.

I've seen the information Capital One obtained from Mr S about his income and what was on the credit search carried out. Capital One says that Mr S declared he had an annual income of £19,000.00. I understand that this is likely to have been cross checked against information from credit reference agencies and therefore, I'm satisfied that Capital One was entitled to rely on this declaration.

The credit search showed that Mr S didn't have any significant adverse information – such as defaulted accounts or County Court Judgments – recorded against him either. I appreciate that Mr S had some existing credit in his name already. But this wasn't an especially high amount. Furthermore, 75% of what Mr S appeared to owe was made up of a car finance agreement.

For the sake of completeness, even if I were to agree that the amount of the credit limit granted and Mr S' credit history meant that Capital One ought to have done more in this instance, it's also not even immediately apparent to me that further checks would have made a difference. I say this because I think that further checks would, at the absolute maximum, have consisted of finding out more about Mr S' living expenses rather than relying on the estimated information.

However, the information Mr S has provided doesn't show me that his non-credit related committed expenditure was significantly higher than the estimates that Capital One relied on. In these circumstances, I don't think that Capital One finding out more about Mr S' living expenses would, in any event, have resulted in it determining that Mr S would be unable to make the monthly payment he could have had to make as a result of using the credit available to him on this card.

Finally, I've noted Mr S' comments about his additional spending. However, I can't see that he declared this to Capital One at the time. Furthermore, as Capital One wasn't required to obtain bank statements from Mr S, it's unclear to me how it could be expected to know about this or the fact that it would impact Mr S' ability to make his payments in the way he's said.

In reaching my conclusions, I've also considered whether the lending relationship between Capital One and Mr S might have been unfair to Mr S under s140A of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 ("CCA").

However, for the reasons I've explained, I've not been persuaded that Capital One irresponsibly lent to Mr S or otherwise treated him unfairly in relation to this matter. And I haven't seen anything to suggest that s140A CCA or anything else would, given the facts of this complaint, lead to a different outcome here.

So overall and having considered everything I don't think that Capital One treated Mr S unfairly or unreasonably in approving his application for a credit card. I appreciate this will be

very disappointing for Mr S. But I hope he'll understand the reasons for my decision and that he'll at least feel his concerns have been listened to.

My final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I'm not upholding Mr S' complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 4 August 2025.

Jeshen Narayanan
Ombudsman