

The complaint

- Mr A complains that Lowell Portfolio I Ltd (Lowell) didn't treat him fairly when he raised allegations of fraud on an account, they were pursuing him for.

What happened

- Mr A had an account with a business I'll call P, as he was unable keep up with the repayments it was sold to Lowell. Mr A set up a payment arrangement with Lowell and paid the debt back in full.
- P later sold another account on to Lowell, that was also in Mr A's name. Lowell contacted Mr A about the account and Mr A responded by phoning Lowell. In the call he said raised two distinct issues:
- P shouldn't have lent to him again so it must be unfair lending, and Lowell should have known this when they bought the account
- The account isn't his and so this must be fraud
- Lowell carried out an internal fraud check and said they were satisfied Mr A was liable for the account. Mr A was unhappy with the speed of this check and wanted to raise a complaint. He added to the complaint that he was unhappy with the way the call was handled.
- Lowell didn't uphold his complaint. But they did contact P to let them know of the issues Mr A had raised, and P asked for the account to be returned to them. Lowell did this and closed the account on their system.
- Mr A remained unhappy with the outcome Lowell reached and so brought his complaint to our service.
- Our investigator didn't think Lowell had done anything wrong so didn't uphold the complaint. Mr A disagreed and so the matter has now 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 realise that I've summarised this complaint in less detail than the parties and I've done so using my own words. I've concentrated on what I consider to be the key issues. The rules that govern this service allow me to do so. If I've not reflected something that's been said in this decision, it's not because I didn't see it, it's because I didn't deem it relevant to the crux of the complaint. This isn't intended as a discourtesy to either party, but merely to reflect my informal role in deciding what a fair and reasonable outcome is.

Unfair lending

- Lowell are a debt purchaser and not the original lender. As such they aren't responsible for the account opening or the decision to lend in the first place. In this case that was P. As such they don't have all of the information about the account opening available to them at the point they purchase the account. So, while they are required to carry out due diligence to reasonably ensure the debt is valid and the account holder's contact details are correct, they are largely entitled to rely on the information provided to them by P at the point of sale. This includes the fact the debt is valid and free from dispute.
- I wouldn't expect them to consider if the debt was lent responsibly or not, at the point they are buying the account. Having said that if someone later raises that issue with them, as Mr A did here, I expect them to pass those concerns back to the original lender to investigate. I can see that Lowell did so in this case, therefore I'm satisfied they did what they needed to do when considering the allegation of unfair lending Mr A made.

Fraud

- As explained above the information Lowell hold, as the debt purchaser, about the account is limited. But I expect them to take allegations of fraud seriously. I'm satisfied they did so here.
- Lowell, have explained they have an initial internal fraud check that takes into account things including but not limited to:
 - the name and contact details on the account matching the individual they are pursuing,
 - transactions being in the area local to the individual
 - payments being received on the account
 - delivery addresses of mail/online orders
 - the length of time the account is running
- It isn't for me to interfere with Lowell's internal processes. But I can say if I think they have acted fairly and followed their process in this case. And I do. I say this because although Mr A thinks the fraud investigation only took a few seconds, the reality is the call handler had collected all of this information in the background while on the phone to Mr A and entered it into the system for the check, he did try to explain this in the call but Mr A spoke over him and didn't give him the opportunity to explain properly. Based on this, I'm satisfied Lowell gave due consideration to Mr A's fraud concern and when he wasn't satisfied with the check they completed, they recorded his complaint and progressed his concerns. So, I didn't find them to be obstructive in anyway.

Call handling

- Having listened to the call between Mr A and Lowell, I've found the call handler was professional and tried to be informative throughout the call. He listened to what Mr A was saying and tried to answer the questions Mr A was asking even when Mr A was

speaking over him and trying to control the answers he was being given or making inappropriate comments.

- Bringing all of this together I'm satisfied that Lowell have acted fairly and in line with their obligations when dealing with Mr A about this account. So, it follows I won't be asking them to do anything more here.
- I realise this isn't the outcome Mr A was hoping for and that this may be disappointing for him but my decision ends – what we in trying to resolve his complaint with Lowell – can do for him.

My final decision

- For the reasons set out above, my final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.
- Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr A to accept or reject my decision before 17 December 2025.

Amber Mortimer
Ombudsman