

## **The complaint**

Mr S complains that Nationwide Building Society unfairly blocked his account without providing a proper explanation.

## **What happened**

The detailed background of this complaint is well known to both parties. So, I'll only provide a brief overview of some of the key events here.

Mr S has a current account with Nationwide.

In September 2024, to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations Nationwide blocked Mr S's account. This meant Mr S wasn't able to access any money in the account. At the time the balance of the account was just under £180,000. Mr S's account remains blocked.

Mr S complained to Nationwide about not being able to access his account and asked the bank for an explanation. He told Nationwide that he was entitled to the money in the account and he hadn't done anything wrong and could prove that the money in the account belonged to him. So, he said Nationwide were wrong to block the account.

In response, Nationwide said it hadn't done anything wrong and wasn't obliged to provide Mr S with an explanation about why it had blocked the account. It also told Mr S to make alternative arrangements to receive incoming payments such as his pension.

Unhappy with this response Mr S brought his complaint to our service where one of our investigator's looked into what had happened. After looking at all the evidence, the investigator said Nationwide had blocked Mr S's account fairly. And had done so to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations. So, he didn't uphold the complaint.

Mr S disagreed. He said not being able to access the money in the account had made things exceedingly difficult for him. And he wants Nationwide to tell him why it has blocked his account for so long.

As no agreement could be reached the matter has come 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 would add too that our rules allow us to receive evidence in confidence. We may treat evidence from banks as confidential for a number of reasons – for example, if it contains security information, or commercially sensitive information. Some of the information Nationwide has provided is information that we considered should be kept confidential. This

means I haven't been able to share a lot of detail with Mr S, but I'd like to reassure him that I have considered everything.

I appreciate that Mr S is upset that Nationwide blocked his account. I can also understand that this was no doubt stressful for him especially as the bank's actions made it difficult for him to receive his pension payments. But for me to uphold this complaint, I must be satisfied that the bank has done something wrong. And in this case, I don't think it has. I'll explain why.

I've no doubt it would've come as quite a shock to Mr S, and he would've been very worried to find out that he couldn't access money and his account had been blocked. But as the investigator has already explained, Nationwide has extensive legal and regulatory responsibilities they must meet when providing account services to customers. They can broadly be summarised as a responsibility to protect persons from financial harm, and to prevent and detect financial crime. Sometimes that means Nationwide must block accounts and in some cases go as far as closing them.

Having reviewed all the evidence and circumstances of this case, I'm satisfied that Nationwide were acting in line with its legal and regulatory obligations when it blocked Mr S's account. The terms and conditions, which Mr S would have agreed to when he opened his account, also make provision for Nationwide to block an account. So, I can't conclude Nationwide treated Mr S unfairly.

I understand of course why Mr S wants to know the exact reasons behind Nationwide's decision, other than what Mr S has been previously told. And I can see that Mr S has asked Nationwide to explain itself on several occasions. But Nationwide is under no obligation to tell Mr S the reasons behind the account block as much as he would like to know. So, I can't say it's done anything wrong by not giving Mr S this information. And it wouldn't be appropriate for me to require it to do so now.

I know Mr S is also upset that Nationwide didn't forewarn him that the account would be blocked, but Nationwide isn't obliged to provide a customer notice of any intended block. So, whilst I appreciate Mr S was caused inconvenience, I can't say Nationwide have done anything wrong by not letting him know that it was going to block the account before the block was put in place.

Mr S has said that Nationwide has kept the account blocked for too long and that he has been constantly chasing Nationwide for updates about when the block would be lifted. I can see that the account has been blocked since September 2024, which I appreciate is a long time. But I've also looked at the information Nationwide has provided to this service about what it was doing whilst the account was blocked which included completing administrative processes to comply with its regulatory obligations. And the reasons it blocked Mr S's account in the first place.

Having done so, I do not consider that it would be right for me to conclude it should not have taken more than any particular or specific timeframe. That's because from looking at all the evidence and circumstances of this complaint, I'm satisfied Nationwide is entitled to do what it did. I say this because Nationwide had reasonable grounds to block Mr S's account – to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations. So, I can't say Nationwide treated Mr S unfairly when it blocked and continued to block his account.

In summary, I realise Mr S will be disappointed by my decision, but I won't be telling Nationwide to do anything more to resolve Mr S's complaint.

**My final decision**

For the reasons I've explained, 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 S to accept or reject my decision before 31 December 2025.

Sharon Kerrison  
**Ombudsman**