

The complaint

Mrs D complains that Nationwide Building Society ('the Society') should pay her compensation for blocking her personal account when it applied restrictions to an account she held jointly.

What happened

Mrs D held a joint account and a personal savings account in her sole name with the Society.

In May 2024, the joint account holder attempted to send two payments from their joint account to a third-party. The Society's fraud detection system flagged these for further checking and applied restrictions to all accounts linked to Mrs D and the other joint account holder. These remained in place until the Society completed its checks and was satisfied it was able to remove account blocks on 3 June 2024.

Meanwhile, Mrs D and the joint account holder decided they wanted to close their accounts and move their funds away from the Society. They were led to think that they'd be able to do this if they went to a Nationwide Building Society branch, but they'd been misinformed and had a wasted trip.

When they complained to us about what happened, our investigator felt that although the account block was correctly applied on the joint account, the Society had misled Mrs D and the other joint account holder into thinking they could attend branch, close their accounts, and move their monies out. The investigator suggested the Society should pay them £100 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused by this misleading advice and their wasted trip. Both parties to the complaint accepted this proposed resolution and the complaint was settled on that basis.

Mrs D feels however that she's personally entitled to receive further compensation because her sole account was blocked at the same time as the joint account.

Our investigator didn't uphold Mrs D's complaint. They were satisfied that the Society hadn't acted unfairly or unreasonably when it blocked Mrs D's personal account and that she'd already received compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused by the wasted trip to a branch. So the investigator said they wouldn't be asking the Society to pay her anything more.

Mrs D disagreed, mainly saying that it was unfair that the joint account holder had received compensation when she hadn't and that they were both entitled to expect more.

The complaint has come to me for a final decision.

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've carried out an independent review and having done so, I've reached the same conclusion as our investigator.

As I understand Mrs D's complaint, she is mostly concerned that she hasn't been fairly compensated for everything that happened. She put things this way: *'While (the joint account holder) was awarded £100 in compensation for the same incident, my claim has been unfairly rejected, despite experiencing identical financial disruption.'*

I appreciate how strongly Mrs D feels about her complaint but I think it's possible some confusion has arisen. The £100 was paid to Mrs D and the joint account holder in settlement of their complaint which they brought together. They were each able to give instructions on behalf of them both and the other joint account holder (using their shared email address) accepted the proposed settlement and gave instructions on where to pay the £100. That money may have gone into the joint account holder's personal account but that was only because this is where the Society was asked to send the money – it was for Mrs D and the joint account holder jointly and how they share this is a matter for them. And just to be clear, the £100 paid already wasn't for blocking the joint account – we hadn't found that the Society did anything wrong when it did this. It was paid to reflect the inconvenience Mrs D and the joint account holder were caused when they were misinformed about what the branch could do for them when they wanted to make new arrangements for their money.

I can't reconsider the closed complaint – so I'm not able to comment further on the blocked joint account or the wasted trip to a branch. My focus in this decision is Mrs D's personal account. And in order to uphold Mrs D's complaint, I would have to find that the Society made an error or acted unfairly or unreasonably when it blocked her personal account as a consequence of blocking the joint account.

The Society must comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and have processes in place to keep customers' money safe. How businesses choose to operate and their internal processes come under the oversight of the Financial Conduct Authority ('FCA'). So it's not up to me to tell the Society how it should implement anti-fraud measures.

The Society explained that as part of its fraud checks that were prompted by what happened on the joint account, it temporarily restricted online access to any accounts linked to Mrs D's profile, which included her sole account. This was to make sure her money was protected whilst the Society reviewed the situation. So I can understand why the Society took the action it did - even if the payments flagged were initiated by the other joint account holder from the joint account. And I am satisfied that the account restrictions applied to Mrs D's account were due to measures the Society has to have in place to safeguard customers' money and fairly applied to her account when its automated anti-fraud system flagged security concerns on the joint account.

The Society's business terms cover this situation and Mrs D would've signed up to the account terms and conditions in order to be able to use the account.

After taking into account everything that Mrs D and the Society have told me, I haven't seen enough to show that the Society did anything wrong or that it treated Mrs D in a way that wasn't fair and reasonable when it blocked her personal account. So I can't uphold this complaint.

I hope that setting things out as I've done helps explain how I've reached my conclusions and even though this isn't the outcome Mrs D hoped for, she will at least feel that the Financial Ombudsman Service has fully considered the complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs D to accept or reject my decision before 15 September 2025.

Susan Webb
Ombudsman