

The complaint

Mr K complained about the actions taken by TSB Bank plc when it blocked a payment he wanted to make.

What happened

In June 2025, Mr K tried to transfer an amount from his account to a third-party. TSB flagged the payment for further security checks and meanwhile suspended Mr K's mobile app and online banking.

In response to a message from TSB, Mr K phoned TSB about this and he was asked security questions. Due to continuing concerns, TSB declined to approve the payment. There was a second phone call, but TSB's position remained unchanged, prompting Mr K to complain that the block was unfair and TSB's questions were unnecessary and inappropriate. Mr K was also unhappy that he'd been unable to speak to a manager on the day.

TSB didn't uphold his complaint. TSB told Mr K that it was required to carry out checks to help keep his account safe and said it had acted in line with the account terms and conditions. It said that no manager had been available to speak to him when he'd asked to be transferred and the call had dropped before a callback could be arranged.

Mr K brought his complaint to us. Our investigator thought that TSB had followed its fraud procedures and hadn't acted unfairly or made an error in the way it handled the situation.

Mr K disagreed with the investigator's view and asked for an ombudsman to review his complaint. He mainly said that he'd logged-in to his online banking app with the necessary security code and phoned the fraud team and TSB had done its security checks – and it was his money to spend as he wished.

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.

This includes listening to call recordings provided.

Having done so, I've decided not to uphold Mr K's complaint. I'll explain why.

I appreciate Mr K feels strongly that TSB wasn't entitled to know more particulars about the transaction than he chose to share or ask him for information he felt wasn't TSB's concern. And I understand his frustration at what happened.

But whilst TSB should carry out customers' lawful instructions, it must balance this against its obligation to protect customers' money and prevent fraud. Sometimes this can mean a financial business identifies and blocks legitimate payments that a customer wants to make. Understandably, this can cause distress and inconvenience to a customer – but it doesn't automatically follow that the financial business has acted incorrectly or unfairly.

TSB is required to have processes set up to comply with legal and regulatory obligations aimed at keeping customers' money safe and preventing fraudulent activity on their accounts. How TSB chooses to operate and its internal processes come under the oversight of the regulator - the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). So it's not up to me to tell TSB how it should verify payments or what questions it can ask or what answers it should accept.

TSB's fraud prevention system identified the need for a check before Mr K's payment could be authorised and temporarily restricted his account access. TSB couldn't simply rely on Mr K approving the proposed payment – even when it was to a person Mr K told TSB he was with and he'd inspected the item he wanted to buy. And it makes no difference to the outcome that Mr K had already passed initial levels of security when he'd logged into his account.

The relevant account terms and conditions, which Mr K would've agreed to in order to be able to use his account, allowed TSB to take this action in these circumstances.

I'd still expect TSB to act in a fair and reasonable way – and I am satisfied that it did. A payment to a fraudster or scammer cannot necessarily be recovered. In my view TSB had reasonable grounds to be concerned when Mr K wasn't able to satisfactorily address its security concerns, especially bearing in mind this was a substantial payment that would have left relatively little money in Mr K's account. And as Mr K was reluctant to engage fully with TSB's fraud team over the phone (saying at one point '*You don't need to know*'), I don't think it was unreasonable for TSB to continue to decline the payment.

When the payment was identified for further checks, TSB applied limited restrictions that didn't stop Mr K being able to use his debit card to make in-person payments or withdraw money. The block preventing Mr K's internet and mobile banking was removed when he phoned TSB so he could use the account freely – other than to make the payment TSB hadn't been able to approve. So I am satisfied that the account restrictions were proportionate and lifted promptly just as soon as TSB no longer had reason to continue them. TSB explained to Mr K that he'd need to make other arrangements to pay the seller if he still wanted to go ahead.

I'm sorry for the way that Mr K's experience speaking to TSB left him feeling. But I am satisfied that the call handlers he spoke with treated him professionally. It was explained why he couldn't be put straight through to a manager. And although it's unfortunate that the call dropped before arrangements could be agreed for a call back, that's not a good enough reason for me to uphold this complaint when Mr K could've called back himself if he'd so wished.

To uphold this complaint I would need to be able to fairly say that TSB did something wrong or acted in a way that wasn't fair and reasonable – and I haven't seen enough here to do so. It follows that I can't award the compensation Mr K would like me to or ask TSB to do anything more.

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 Mr K to accept or reject my decision before 9 October 2025.

Susan Webb
Ombudsman