

The complaint

Mrs G complains that The Co-operative Bank Plc (Co-op) unfairly migrated her account without notice or consent. She's also unhappy that the bank failed to respond to her promptly after she complained.

What happened

In May last year, Mrs G complained after receiving a closing statement showing a nil balance on her account. She was unhappy that Co-op closed her account without notifying her and wanted to understand what had happened to her funds.

Following further communications, in September, Co-op explained that Mrs G's account had been migrated, and her funds transferred to a new account. Co-op didn't respond to the complaint until November, in which it explained that the bank had previously notified Mrs G that her account would be migrated. The bank recognised that it had delayed its response to Mrs G's complaint and offered her £50 compensation.

Mrs G remained unhappy and referred her complaint to this service. She says she was left in the dark about the status of her account for around six months, causing her distress. She adds that she's elderly and is of poor health and Co-op's actions made things difficult for her. She wants the bank to pay more compensation.

Our investigator issued their outcome, explaining that Co-op had acted fairly. Mrs G didn't agree – she reiterates her concerns about how her complaint was handled and points to her submission that she's never seen a copy of Co-op's letter notifying her of the migration. Mrs G adds that during contact with various advisors at the bank, she was advised of the bank's failings and believes a higher amount of compensation was previously on offer.

Because Mrs G doesn't agree, the complaint has been passed to me for a final review.

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'd like to start by saying that I've considered all the arguments and evidence provided by both parties, but in this decision, I'll be referring to and focusing on what I consider to be the main points. No discourtesy is intended by this. We aim for our decisions to be as concise as possible.

It's my understanding that, due to a historic merger, Mrs G's account held with a different banking provider came under the ownership of Co-op. The bank says that it could no longer offer the same type of account that Mrs G held previously, so it decided to migrate her account into one that Co-op provides.

Mrs G says she wasn't notified of the bank's decision to migrate her account, and it was carried out without her consent. She says she was distressed when she received a closing

statement for her previous account showing a nil balance.

Co-op points to a letter it says was sent to Mrs G on 7 May, advising her of the bank's plans to migrate her account. Mrs G says she didn't receive the letter. Unfortunately, the bank no longer holds a copy of the letter but has provided records to show that it was sent to Mrs G's address. Although I can't say with certainty that Mrs G received the letter, I'm satisfied that it was sent to her. And I haven't seen anything to persuade me that Mrs G has experienced problems receiving correspondence from Co-op before. So, on balance, I'm persuaded the bank took reasonable steps to notify Mrs G that her account would be migrated.

I appreciate Mrs G isn't convinced given she says she hasn't seen a copy of the notification that was sent to her. However, as I've explained, Co-op no longer holds a copy of the actual letter it sent. It has provided this service with an example of what was sent to Mrs G, and I'm satisfied it would've adequately notified her of the bank's plans and the options available to her.

It's also up to financial institutions to determine what banking facilities to offer customers. In this instance, Co-op made the commercial decision to stop providing the type of account Mrs G held with the third-party bank Co-op merged with. Commercial practices such as this aren't ones I have the power to interfere with, unless I make a finding that Mrs G was treated unfairly by Co-op in its application of its commercial decision. I haven't found that it did here, so I won't be asking the bank to do anything as a result.

Turning to the delay Mrs G experienced after she complained about the closure of her account. I note that this part of her complaint relates to complaint handling, which is something that doesn't typically fall under the remit of this service. However, given the crux of the complaint she made was as part of her efforts to establish why her account had been closed and what had happened to her funds, I'm satisfied that I have the remit to comment on this aspect of her complaint.

Co-op already accepts that it had taken longer than it should've to issue a formal response to Mrs G's complaint. And it offered her £50 compensation. I'm satisfied that this offer is reasonable.

I say this because I can see the bank sent Mrs G updates in July and August 2024, advising that it was still reviewing her complaint and providing an expected time frame for its final response. So I'm satisfied Mrs G was kept updated as to the progress of her complaint. Moreover, the August letter advised Mrs G of her right to refer her complaint to this service. Although she didn't do so until November last year, I'm satisfied Co-op gave her the opportunity to do so sooner – which was in line with its regulatory expectations.

Additionally, I note that Mrs G was in regular contact with the bank over the phone. And in September, Co-op confirmed what had happened to her account and her funds. I appreciate that some of the calls were related to other administrative issues which delayed things further. But I don't find that the bank's delay in responding to the complaint caused Mrs G a loss or distress to a degree that persuades me further compensation is due.

I note Mrs G's submission that some conversations with the bank led her to believe that there were failings on Co-op's part and that further compensation was potentially on offer. However, I can only base my findings on the evidence available and the bank's formal position on this matter. So although I don't doubt Mrs G's recollection of conversations she may have had with Co-op advisors, my decision remains - that the £50 compensation on offer is a fair way to settle this complaint.

For these reasons, I won't be asking Co-op to increase its compensation offer or do anything

further in relation to this complaint. Should Mrs G decide to accept the offer the bank has made, she should reach out directly to Co-op.

My final decision

For the reasons explained, I'm not upholding this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs G to accept or reject my decision before 14 October 2025.

Abdul Ali
Ombudsman