

The complaint

Mrs T complains that AMERICAN EXPRESS SERVICES EUROPE LIMITED (Amex), reduced her credit limit on her credit card and would not reinstate it for her.

When I refer to what Mrs T and/or Amex said or did, it should also be taken to include things said or done on their behalf.

What happened

Mrs T said that on 10 May 2025, she successfully increased her credit limit from £4,500 to £7,000 in preparation for a family holiday. However, after attempting to request an additional increase via the Amex app, an error occurred, reducing her limit to £1,000. Mrs T said she submitted two formal complaints, one on 15 May 2025 and another on 16 June 2025, and, despite multiple attempts to resolve this matter with Amex, have encountered inconsistent and contradictory information, causing significant frustration.

Mrs T said Amex did not inform her that limit increases are subject to a restrictive 30-day policy, or that reductions in limits are particularly difficult to reverse. She said she was given inconsistent information each time from Amex when asking about the waiting period for a new limit request to be successful. She said that, initially, she was told she would need to wait three days. Later, she was told to wait three working days, and following that, 30 days. Mrs T said that more recently, she had been told the waiting period could extend to 3-4 months. However, she said that after waiting for 30 days as instructed, her limit increase request was declined again on 15 June 2025, despite no change in her financial standing.

Mrs T said that she has applied for a credit limit increase four times since May 2025, all of which have been rejected:

- 13 May 2025;
- 15 June 2025;
- 25 September 2025;
- 4 February 2026.

Mrs T said she is unhappy as the current £1,000 credit limit is entirely inadequate for her needs. She frequently reaches this limit, which forces her to make immediate payments just to keep transactions moving. As such, she said that this ongoing issue has caused significant inconvenience and unnecessary disruption to her financial activities and has affected her credit score. She would like to Amex to immediately reinstate her original £7,000 credit limit, or at a minimum, return it to the original £4,500 limit that she had when she first opened the account in October 2024. Also, Mrs T thinks she should be provided with appropriate compensation for the daily inconvenience, delays, and disruption to her holiday plans caused by this ongoing issue.

Amex wrote to Mrs T on 7 July 2025. In this correspondence they said, having reviewed her account, that Mrs T contacted them on the 10 May 2025 after accidentally decreasing her credit limit from £7,000 to £1,000. They apologised for any misleading or confusing communication with Mrs T, and said they would like to clarify that although a request to increase her credit limit can be submitted three days after a previous increase, the increase

itself cannot be guaranteed. Additionally, there is no guaranteed timeframe. They said they understand the dissatisfaction she had experienced with the advice regarding the timeframes therefore, they have applied £25 to her account.

In that correspondence Amex also explained that they are currently unable to approve her credit limit increase request. They said the eligibility for credit limit increase is determined based on internal and external factors. They said that a credit limit decrease can be requested at any time, however, if she wishes to have her credit limit restored, a new credit limit increase request must be submitted and will be subject to approval.

Mrs T remained unhappy. As such she referred her complaint to us, the Financial Ombudsman Service (Financial Ombudsman).

Our investigator did not think it was reasonable to ask Amex to do anything further.

Mrs T disagreed with the investigator. As such, the complaint has 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.

Where evidence is unclear or in dispute, I reach my findings on the balance of probabilities – which is to say, what I consider most likely to have happened based on the evidence available and the surrounding circumstances.

I have summarised this complaint briefly, in less detail than has been provided, and largely in my own words. No discourtesy is intended by this. If there is something I have not mentioned, I have not ignored it. I have not commented on every individual detail. But I have focused on those that are central to me reaching, what I think is, the right outcome. This reflects the informal nature of the Financial Ombudsman as a free alternative to the courts.

In considering what is fair and reasonable, I need to take into account the relevant rules, guidance, good industry practice, the law and, where appropriate, what would be considered good industry practice at the relevant time.

Mrs T has raised many additional points in her complaint with Financial Ombudsman compared with the ones she raised with Amex before they issued the 7 July 2025 correspondence to her. Some of these additional points were around the further limit increase requests and issues she has been experiencing with Amex application/systems. In this decision, I only focused on the aspects I can look into. As such, I am only looking at the events that have been raised by Mrs T with Amex, the ones they had an opportunity to address in their correspondence sent to her on 7 July 2025.

I can see from the evidence provided that on 10 May 2025 Mrs T was successful in increasing her credit limit from £4,500 to £7,000. However, shortly after this, on the same day, Mrs T requested to decrease her credit limit to £1,000. I understand that this was done in error as Mrs T was not trying to decrease her limit to £1,000 but instead her aim was to increase the new limit from £7,000 to £8,000. Mrs T said this happened because the Amex app was confusing and unclear. She believes that there should have been more warnings and safeguards.

First, I should point out that it is not within the remit of the Financial Ombudsman to tell Amex how they should design their applications/systems. However, I can look at whether

their application/system, or their actions/inactions, meant that Mrs T was treated unfairly or unreasonably. Looking at how Mrs T would have requested the credit limit increase or decrease using the application, I can see that the application would have asked her to enter her desired credit limit and, as Mrs T entered: '£1,000', her credit limit was decreased accordingly. I considered that Mrs T was able to use this feature of the application correctly when she increased her credit limit from £4,500 to £7,000. In addition, if Mrs T found the application confusing or unclear, it would have been reasonable for her to check with Amex before deciding to submit her limit change request. She could have done that by contacting them directly or using the chat function. As such, I cannot say that Amex should be responsible for the fact that Mrs T's credit limit was decreased to £1,000.

Second, I have considered what happened when Mrs T applied for a credit limit increase on 14 May 2025 and 15 June 2025. From the available evidence, I understand that Amex informed Mrs T that she did not meet their internal criteria to have her credit limit increased. They said, eligibility for credit limit increase is determined based on internal and external factors. This is not unreasonable, as Amex was entitled to take into account both the management of Mrs T's credit card account she has with them, and her wider financial circumstances. And, I understand, based on the information they had, and information provided by Mrs T, she did not meet their criteria for a credit limit increase at that time. As such, based on all the available evidence I have not seen enough to allow me to say that, most likely, Amex treated Mrs T unfairly.

I do realise that Amex did give Mrs T misleading or confusing information regarding the three- and 30-day timescales. However, I can see that they have apologised and clarified this for her, plus applied £25 to her account. As such, I do not think it would be fair and reasonable to ask them to take any further action regarding this aspect of Mrs T's complaint.

I appreciate that this is not the outcome Mrs T hoped for, and I want to express my sympathy for the position she is in. However, I have not seen enough evidence to be able to say that, most likely, Amex needs to take any further action in relation to her complaint.

My final decision

For the reasons given above, I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs T to accept or reject my decision before 10 March 2026.

Mike Kozbial
Ombudsman