

The complaint

Mr H complains about the actions taken by Nationwide Building Society when it stopped a payment he wanted to make and blocked his online banking until he completed further security checks.

To put things right Mr H would like Nationwide to address his complaint fully, apologise and pay him substantial financial redress.

What happened

In January 2025, Nationwide declined a payment when Mr H tried to transfer a four-figure amount from his account with Nationwide to a third-party crypto trading platform and blocked his online banking access. When Mr H phoned Nationwide about this, he objected to having to answer questions he was asked before Nationwide approved the payment and unblocked his online banking.

When Mr H complained to Nationwide about what happened, Nationwide didn't uphold his complaint. It said his payment had been flagged by its Fraud Detection System and the fraud team had asked questions it considered relevant to rule out any scam concerns – and its actions had been in line with the account terms and conditions. Nationwide said that if Mr H was concerned about personal information having been recorded in the responses he gave the fraud team, that could be deleted.

Mr H didn't feel this was a satisfactory response and so he brought his complaint to us.

Our investigator didn't consider that Nationwide did anything wrong or that it needed to do anything further. Mr H strongly disagreed with our investigator. He mainly said the investigator hadn't understood or addressed all aspects of his complaint – including the fact that he only opened the account on the understanding he could use it for his planned trading activities and he was misled about this. And Mr H was unhappy that Nationwide hadn't taken into account his personal guarantee that the payment had nothing to do with fraud and his acceptance of full liability for the payment.

Mr H has asked for an ombudsman to review his complaint, so it comes 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.

This includes listening to the call recording provided so I've been able to hear Mr H's conversation with the call handler in Nationwide's fraud team. Having thought about everything, I've independently reached the same overall conclusions as our investigator. I'll explain my reasons.

Mr H was entitled to expect that Nationwide would act towards him in a fair and reasonable way. So this is the focus of my decision.

Nationwide must comply with its legal and regulatory obligations which include protecting customers from financial harm. This means that Nationwide has to have its own processes in place so it can carry out necessary checks. Nationwide couldn't simply rely on Mr H carrying out his own due diligence – even if he was willing to provide personal assurances and approve the proposed payment himself. Nationwide explained it has fraud prevention measures in place and its system identified the need for a check before Mr H's payment could be authorised. The relevant account terms and conditions, which Mr H would've agreed to in order to be able to use his account, allowed Nationwide to refuse his payment instruction and block his account access in these circumstances.

So I don't find that Nationwide made any error or did anything wrong when it blocked the payment Mr H wanted to make and restricted his account access to protect the money in his account.

Nonetheless, Nationwide still needed to act in a fair and reasonable way towards Mr H. Given that Nationwide is required to satisfy regulatory requirements and have in place measures to combat fraud and protect customers from scams, I don't think the questions Nationwide's fraud team asked were unreasonable – particularly given the amount here involved a substantial sum and Nationwide was aware of scams involving this type of investment.

I understand Mr H found this intrusive and he considered the questions irrelevant and unnecessary. He put things this way: *'... This is my money. It's up to me what I spend my money on – not you'*.

But Nationwide had a responsibility to enquire into the details of the transaction to help guard against potential scams and it was up to Nationwide to authorise the payment – or not. I think the sort of questions asked would be raised with any customer who wanted to undertake a similar transaction. So, I don't think Nationwide acted unfairly or unreasonably when it took the steps it did to verify what it needed to know about Mr H's planned spending.

After completing the necessary checks, Nationwide allowed the payment to go through and unblocked Mr H's account. So I don't find that Nationwide blocked the transfer or kept Mr H out of his account for any longer than was fair and reasonable.

I recognise that Mr H found all this frustrating. But to uphold this complaint I would need to be able to fairly say that Nationwide 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 H would like me to. And I won't be asking Nationwide to do anything more.

I appreciate that my decision will be disappointing for Mr H but I hope that setting things out as I've done helps explain how I've reached my conclusions.

I would just mention here that as the payment was duly approved when Nationwide had enough information to authorise its release, it seems clear this is a service Nationwide does provide. But I can't comment further on this as mis-advertising its services wasn't part of Mr H's original complaint that I am dealing with here. If Mr H still feels he has further cause for complaint (that goes beyond the scope of the complaint he brought to us), then he should first tell Nationwide what his concerns are, so it has an opportunity to respond. If he still feels unhappy after that, he may be able to bring a new complaint to this service. I can't award redress for any complaint where the financial business hasn't first been given a chance to put things right.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold Mr H's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 16 October 2025.

Susan Webb
Ombudsman