

The complaint

Mr and Mrs I are unhappy with National Westminster Bank Plc.

I will refer mainly to Mr I as he has dealt with the issue throughout.

Mr I is a personal customer of NatWest and was until recently involved at board level with a local charity that was also a NatWest customer.

When Mr I stepped down from the charity work he warned NatWest that its practice of maintaining the same username for personal and charity bank accounts was flawed. Mr I was worried this would impact on his ability to use his personal accounts.

What happened

Mr I said NatWest dealt with his query in a condescending, dismissive manner. Mr I set up a branch appointment but was called two hours in advance of the meeting and asked why he wanted an appointment. He explained the issue and was told he couldn't have a meeting and there was nothing the staff member could do as username details are a standard process.

In March 2025 the charity's mandate was updated, Mr I was removed, and he was immediately unable to use his personal account. He contacted NatWest, it acknowledged the change and said it could take up to seven days to generate a new username and password. This was the first time this had been acknowledged and led to Mr I starting his complaint.

Mr I said this caused him unnecessary stress. As he pointed out he had warned it about the issue in advance. He felt ignored and wasn't happy that as a loyal customer he had been declined the appointment.

Mr I said having the same username for personal and charity accounts is wrong and could have implications around privacy of data and jeopardise account security. He said NatWest offered £100 and paid it into his account. He said compensation wasn't part of his complaint and he wasn't consulted on the amount. He felt the way it did this was undermining.

Mr I would like NatWest to change the process and offer customers different log in credentials for different types of accounts such as personal and charity. He said this would be a change for the better.

Mr I was also upset and wants NatWest to pay more attention to spelling his and his wife's name correctly. He said it consistently gets this wrong.

NatWest accepted Mr I was told during a call that online banking wouldn't be affected and *"at most you will need to re-register which would take minutes when in fact this is not the case."* It apologised for this error and said it would look into this further. It said Mr I was removed from the charity and sent a new code the next day which showed on its system as successfully matched. It said records showed Mr I was active for online banking. It again

apologised for any conflicting information given out around this point. It said as Mrs I used the same log in it would be best if she registered under her own details for the future.

NatWest said it would also look into the cancelled appointment, and this wasn't the service it expects customers to receive.

It sent £100 to Mr I's account for his trouble and upset. It said if he had any additional costs, it could look at these, but it might require evidence.

As Mr I remained unhappy he brought his complaint to this service.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. She said NatWest's approach of having one login made system navigation more simple and easier to manage. Our investigator said Mr I's personal information wasn't disclosed to the charity, there was no privacy breach, the disruption he experienced was expected when the charity mandate was updated. She said Mr I had been provided new login details and access had been restored. Mr I accepted he hadn't suffered any financial loss. Our investigator felt the £100 compensation was fair.

Regarding further action on data concerns, she said Mr I may wish to raise this with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Mr I didn't accept this and asked for his complaint to be passed to an ombudsman 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'd like to start by assuring the parties that I have read and reviewed everything. Even though I may not comment on it here, it has been considered.

There's no doubt Mr I could see that a problem might arise when he stepped down from his work with the charity. And so he made efforts to resolve this in advance. That isn't in doubt. So, it's understandable why he feels NatWest was dismissive as despite his attempts to get this dealt with before it became a problem there was no attempt to help or seemingly consider the points he had made by NatWest.

There's no doubt that the issues, when they occurred created difficulties for Mr I as he was unable to access his personal account. As he had tried to avoid this happening in the first place, it's not surprising that he complained. Mr I feels the compensation is NatWest trying to sweep the matter of usernames being the same under the carpet. He said it sent him an arbitrary amount.

Mr I wants customers to have different username log-in details to access accounts of different natures. He said this would be in NatWest's interests too. Mr I said NatWest told him any changes it makes to its processes wouldn't be communicated to him. He concluded by asking NatWest to pay more attention to his surname and spell it correctly.

NatWest did accept Mr I's complaint. It did apologise and understood that he felt let down by the service provided around the username log-in issue. It agreed Mr I was given conflicting information.

NatWest said the day after the problem arose a new code was requested by Mr I and "matched" the same day. It said he was able to use his online banking again from the day

after the problem arose. NatWest said Mr I had used the service regularly since then. NatWest agreed that it had noted Mr I's comments about what he thought it should do about different usernames.

Regarding the £100 compensation NatWest said this was to acknowledge poor service and to try and repair the customer relationship. It said to enable it to better support customers it now has its *"Banking My Way service"* where customers *"can record any information that they would like to let us know about. This is designed to improve customer interactions with the bank, avoid the need to repeat information and ensure that my colleagues know how best to support customers."*

I can understand the actions Mr I took and I can understand his concerns about having the same log-in details across accounts. I think the worst thing about the issues here is that Mr I tried to get in front of the situation, warn NatWest and still got nowhere and ended up having to deal with the problem after it occurred. There's no doubt that would have been highly frustrating for him. I think there's no doubt that NatWest didn't act fairly or reasonably in allowing a clearly avoidable situation to still arise despite Mr I warning it.

I also think Mr I made a fair point about the face to face meeting. I accept NatWest said it would look into this but from a customer service perspective again it doesn't look fair or reasonable to stop a customer trying to make sure he can maintain access to his accounts. If anything in this situation NatWest should be seeing the problem arise and trying to resolve it instead of leaving this to its customer.

There's no doubt Mr I suffered poor customer service here. Being unable to use his account should never have happened. But I don't think it was unfair of NatWest to act by paying him compensation directly to his account. I accept its point about this being an attempt to acknowledge the lack of service and repair the relationship. I think that's fair and reasonable.

I take on board Mr I's point about no discussion, and he didn't even want the compensation, but I think it is likely the only thing NatWest could offer aside from the apology that it also gave.

I accept that NatWest isn't going to update Mr I on action it decides to take about its username process. I know this is what Mr I wants but I understand that such changes or consideration of such changes would take time and require a lot of work in the background. I think NatWest was being realistic when it said any changes wouldn't be personally communicated to him.

I'm not going to comment on whether or not the username process is right or wrong because that isn't my remit. I'm here to consider if NatWest has treated Mr I fairly and reasonably. NatWest has its processes and no doubt it constantly reviews and considers these in line with rules and regulations it has to apply. So, I'm not going to comment on GDPR or data risks as such issues are more for the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). In this complaint NatWest has confirmed there was no breach of data and that is all I can consider. It confirmed no personal information was disclosed to the charity.

Mr I was without access for a short period, and this was frustrating and unfortunate. NatWest was clearly at fault for this, but it did get a new code out to him when requested and it appears Mr I had account access again within roughly 24 hours. Mr I confirmed that he suffered no financial loss. So, I do think NatWest has offered a fair outcome to try and resolve the complaint.

NatWest accepted it needed to do better around the spelling of Mr and Mrs I's names. I think that its poor and a shame Mr I had to even mention it. But now that he has, I expect NatWest to make more effort to ensure it gets this right in the future.

My final decision

I don't uphold this complaint.

I make no award against National Westminster Bank Plc.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr I and Mrs I to accept or reject my decision before 11 December 2025.

John Quinlan
Ombudsman