

The complaint

Mr V complains TSB Bank plc isn't helping him despite the fact that he's not been able to receive one-time passcodes since 28 February 2025.

What happened

Mr V has an account with TSB and has done so for almost 13 years.

Mr V says he's been living abroad for at least 10 years and throughout that time he had no problems accessing online banking for his account with TSB. He says that's meant he's been able to access his modest pension.

Mr V says that ever since TSB had problems with its online banking – at the end of February 2025 – he hasn't been able to receive one-time passcodes. He contacted TSB and complained when it “did nothing” to resolve the issue.

TSB says it looked into Mr V's complaint and said that it was aware customers living in the country he did were having issues receiving one-time passcodes. TSB said it was unable to say how long this would take to fix but it was looking into the matter. In the meantime, TSB said that its digital offering was – as made clear in its terms and conditions – not guaranteed to work outside the UK and that its accounts are designed for UK residents. Mr V was very unhappy with TSB's response and complained to our service.

One of investigators looked into Mr V's complaint and said that they didn't think TSB had acted unfairly. They said that TSB had sent evidence showing it was sending one-time passcodes to Mr V, so the issue he was having was outside TSB's control. They also said that they could see Mr V had been able to access his account using telephone banking. Finally, they said that Mr V appeared to use his account to make payments to a gambling company only which was at odds with his suggestion that he couldn't afford to pay for food and other essentials.

Mr V was very unhappy with our investigator's recommendations and findings. He said that he withdraws the money he sends to the gambling company immediately after sending it and gets the money credited onto a local pay as you go debit card he has. He said that this avoids “extortionate charges and exchange rates” that TSB charges. He also said that the only way he's been able to access his account recently is by updating his number to a UK number belonging to a friend of his who then forwards the one-time passcode to him. Finally, he said that he was a UK resident, so didn't accept TSB's explanations.

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.

On 28 August 2025 I issued a provisional decision saying that I was minded to uphold this complaint and award Mr V £250 in compensation. In addition, I required TSB to tell me what steps it has taken to resolve the one-time passcodes issue that Mr V had raised, and what

the latest position was. I gave a deadline of 11 September 2025 for replies.

In my provisional decision, I said that I was satisfied that Mr V was using a workaround to withdraw money from his account with TSB to avoid charges and that he was using the money he withdrew to pay for food and essentials. And that I was satisfied that this workaround had broken down because he wasn't receiving one-time passcodes. I also said that I was satisfied that Mr V has since developed a new but unsafe workaround – suggested by a TSB agent – but that not receiving one-time passcodes had caused him distress and inconvenience. In relation to this, I said the following:

“In this case, I can see both parties’ sides. TSB relies on third parties to understand / resolve issues relating to the delivery of one-time passcodes overseas. So, if there is a problem where Mr V lives – and no-one seems to be disputing that – TSB has to rely on others making it harder to guarantee timescales. Equally, Mr V has been a customer of TSB for many years and during most of that time it seems he’s lived overseas, so I can see why he feels TSB should do more as he’s not had problems with his account before. On balance, it does look like something has gone wrong at TSB’s end – given that Mr V has been able to use his account abroad for many years without any issues – and whilst TSB can’t be expected to resolve issues straightaway I do think it could and should have investigated the issue with more urgency and come up with a fix much sooner.”

Both parties were invited to reply to my provisional decision and both did.

Mr V said that he hadn't received a one-time passcode from TSB for nearly seven months and hadn't received a single update from TSB during that time despite him sending countless emails asking for news. He was very unhappy with TSB's lack of communication and lack of urgency saying that this should be a simple issue to fix. He said that he was happy to accept the compensation I'd proposed but desperately needed the problem solved.

TSB said that network operators in the country where Mr V lives started blocking traffic in February 2025 and that this was a matter totally outside of TSB's control. TSB didn't, therefore, agree that something had gone wrong at its end. TSB said that it has now gained the relevant permissions to send SMSs to the country where Mr V lives and that the issue was fixed on 27 August 2025. In other words, the day before my provisional decision. TSB said that any distress and inconvenience that Mr V had experienced was, therefore, the fault of the network operators not it. TSB let me know that the one-time passcode issue had been fixed on 23 September 2025 – in other words, more than 10 days after the deadline to reply to my provisional decision and almost a month after the problem had been fixed – and Mr V has since confirmed that he's able to receive one-time passcodes once again. Mr V questioned why TSB hadn't told him that the issue had been fixed saying that their lack of communication throughout had caused him considerable frustration.

Having re-considered the evidence as well as the comments both parties have made, I remain of the view that TSB hasn't acted fairly or reasonably in this case. I accept that some of the issues here are outside its control, but I agree with Mr V that there has been a lack of communication and lack of urgency on TSB's part and that this has caused Mr V considerable inconvenience. The fact, for example, that TSB only told me that the issue had been fixed a month 10 days after the deadline to reply to my provisional decision – in which I required TSB to update me – and almost a month after the problem had been fixed and the fact that Mr V only found out from us that the issue had been fixed is a good example of TSB's lack of communication and lack of urgency and the latest one. I, therefore, remain of the view that this complaint should be upheld.

Putting things right

In my provisional decision, I said I was minded to award Mr V £250 in compensation. I've seen nothing to suggest that this isn't fair. So, that's the award I'm going to make.

My final decision

My final decision is that I'm uphold this complaint and require TSB Bank plc to pay Mr V £250 in compensation.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr V to accept or reject my decision before 7 November 2025.

Nicolas Atkinson
Ombudsman