

The complaint

Mr Z complains how National Westminster Bank Plc (NatWest) processed an ISA transfer he requested. As a result, Mr Z has suffered stress, lost time, and inconvenience.

What happened

The circumstances that led to the complaint are well known by both parties, so I won't repeat them in detail, especially in view of the well-documented view provided by our investigator.

In April 2024, Mr Z requested with another provider who I'll refer to as C, to transfer his cash ISA to NatWest. This was rejected and re-attempted more than once. Mr Z then decided to transfer the funds himself manually which also rejected and resulted in NatWest crediting the returning funds to a non-ISA account.

Unhappy with what happened to the ISA transfer request, and holding NatWest responsible, Mr Z logged a complaint with NatWest.

NatWest investigated the complaint, explained what had happened including the rejections but said they were not at fault. NatWest ended their letter by referring Mr Z to the other provider, C. Mr Z responded to NatWest not satisfied with their findings and supplied more information. NatWest reactivated the complaint and responded again to Mr Z confirming that they could not agree with the complaint, although as a goodwill gesture, they credited Mr Z with £70 for distress and inconvenience.

Remaining unhappy with NatWest's further response, Mr Z brought his complaint to our service.

Our investigator looked into the complaint and didn't think NatWest needed to take any action. They laid out in detail what had happened to the ISA transfer request including the rejections, Mr Z's intervention in which he moved the funds manually, and that NatWest were dependant on the details provided on the transfer request that C sent to NatWest.

Around the same time, NatWest as a goodwill gesture, offered to reinstate the funds into the ISA which Mr Z agreed to.

Mr Z disagreed with the investigator's outcome mentioning that he firmly believed that NatWest were at fault as they did not do enough and communicated poorly. Accordingly, Mr Z requested an ombudsman review his complaint.

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.

As an informal dispute resolution service, we are tasked with reaching a fair and reasonable conclusion with the minimum of formality. In doing so, it is not necessary for me to respond to every point made, but to consider the circumstances of the complaint as a whole.

Having done so, I've reached the same overall conclusion as the investigator. I know Mr Z will be disappointed as I can see how strongly he feels about what happened, so I'll explain why. If I don't mention any specific point, it's not because I failed to take it on board and think about it, but because I don't think I need to comment on it to reach what I think is a fair and reasonable outcome. No discourtesy is intended by me in taking this approach.

It is always regrettable when we see an everyday simple process like transferring an ISA result in a longer protracted experience. I sympathise with Mr Z for the frustration he experienced. It's our role to identify if a business has made a mistake and if so, look at the impact this has had on the consumer.

I thank Mr Z for the significant amount of information he has submitted to our service to show that NatWest should shoulder some responsibility for the ISA transfer issue. And I'd like to reassure Mr Z that I have carefully considered all of it in my decision. But looking over it in detail, it does appear that here, NatWest simply responded to the ISA request from C, including following the subscription information contained within. Our investigator has already shown what boxes were ticked, and I find this to be a major contributing factor to what happened. Therefore it would not be fair to hold NatWest responsible here.

I know in light of our investigator finding that NatWest are not at fault— which I agree with — it's been suggested that Mr Z pursues the other provider C which I understand he is in the process of doing. If Mr Z remains dissatisfied with the response he receives from C, C should provide him with referral rights to our service which Mr Z can avail himself of.

In terms of NatWest's gesture to reinstate the ISA transfer funds back into Mr Z's ISA account, I see after Mr Z's agreement that our investigator requested that NatWest go ahead with this. But I haven't seen acknowledgement from them which is disappointing, especially in light of them offering. Therefore, this is an action I will be requiring NatWest to complete, and confirm with Mr Z.

In conclusion, I do sympathise greatly with Mr Z's position and while he is likely to be unhappy with my decision, I can't find sufficient evidence to show NatWest made errors with the ISA transfer request. Therefore, other than the reinstatement of funds, I can't ask them to do anything further.

My final decision

For the reasons I have given it is my final decision that the complaint is upheld, and I require NatWest to reinstate the funds in question back to Mr Z's ISA and amend the associated ISA subscriptions accordingly.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr Z to accept or reject my decision before 17 November 2025.

Chris Blamires
Ombudsman