

The complaint

Ms S complains National Westminster Bank PLC allowed her current account to go into an unarranged overdraft when it shouldn't have.

What happened

Ms S purchased an item from an online retailer on 24 July 2025. I'll refer to the retailer as 'M'.

At the time of making the purchase Ms S' account had enough funds to cover the payment. So, NatWest approved the payment. The payment was then pending until M requested it. I understand in the meantime Ms M received the item.

M then requested the payment and it was debited from Ms S' account on 30 July 2025.

However, Ms S removed funds from her account on 30 July 2025 which didn't leave enough to cover the cost of the item. This meant her account went into an unarranged overdraft.

Ms S said NatWest shouldn't have completed the payment and she made a complaint.

NatWest didn't uphold the complaint. It said the transaction was correctly authorised when funds were in the account. And it said when the amount was debited some days later the account went overdrawn because the funds had been transferred out by Ms S.

Ms S remained unhappy and referred the complaint to our service. Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. He said NatWest was allowed to complete the payment which resulted in the account going overdrawn. And he didn't think NatWest had acted unreasonably or made an error.

Ms S 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.

Having done so I've reached the same outcome as our investigator for broadly similar reasons. I understand this will be disappointing to Ms S and I'll explain my findings.

Although I may not mention every point Ms S has made, I'd like to reassure her I've considered them throughout my investigation. I've focused on the main points relevant to my outcome.

The terms of Ms S' current account with NatWest state:

"7.5 Timescales for making debit card payments

We'll only take a debit card payment from your account when we receive the request from the payee's bank (for example, the store). This means there may be a delay between using your debit card to make a purchase and the payment being taken from your account. We'll always take payments that have been charged to your debit card from your account and we'll do so within one business day of receiving the request for payment."

So, this explains NatWest will only take the payment once it receives the request from the retailer. And depending on when the retailer requests it there may be a delay between making the purchase and the payment being taken from the account.

I understand M didn't request the payment until around 30 July 2025.

Ms M said NatWest shouldn't have allowed the payment to be taken on 30 July 2025 and she said NatWest only allow five days before pending payments are stopped.

Having considered NatWest's online guidance around pending payments from debit cards I don't think this is correct. I'll explain why.

The guidance is clear in saying a pending transaction might not show in your balance. So, it may look like there is more money in your account than there really is. And when a payment is made with a debit card, the payment doesn't leave the account straight away. It will only be taken once the retailer, in this case M, processes the payment.

For UK payments it typically takes a retailer up to three working days to process the payment. But on some occasions the retailer may take longer than three working days to process the payment. In this case M took longer, but that doesn't mean NatWest did something wrong in issuing the payment once M had processed it.

I think NatWest acted reasonably in authorising the payment on 24 July 2025 because there were sufficient funds in the account. The payment was then due to be taken from the account once it was processed by M. M processed the payment on 30 July 2025, around four working days later. At which point NatWest issued the payment.

I'm satisfied NatWest acted correctly in issuing the payment as it was authorised while funds were in the account and then the payment was pending until it was processed by M. This means the payment would be issued even if there were no longer sufficient funds in the account.

Unfortunately, Ms M had removed the funds from her account which meant when the payment to M was completed the account went overdrawn.

So, I don't think NatWest have done something wrong here.

I appreciate it will have been distressing for Ms S to think the payment for the item wouldn't go through because there weren't sufficient funds in her account anymore. Only to find out the payment did leave her account. But for the reasons given above I can't say NatWest have done something wrong and so I can't ask them to do anymore in this case.

So, in summary, I think NatWest acted reasonably and in line with the terms of the account in processing the payment as it did. And I make no award against it.

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 Ms S to accept or reject my decision before 2 January 2026.

Gordon Candlish
Ombudsman