

The complaint

Mr W complains that Nationwide Building Society (Nationwide) treated him unfairly when he was trying to undertake some balance transfers on his new credit card.

What happened

The background to this complaint is well known to all parties so I'll just give a broad overview here.

In May 2025, Mr W received a new credit card from Nationwide which included a 0% balance transfer option allowing him to transfer credit balances from his other credit cards to reduce his overall interest payments.

Mr W used his Nationwide banking app to try and make the balance transfers and was asked by the app to use the card reader that was provided to Mr W when he first registered for internet banking services with Nationwide. This was to provide Nationwide with an additional identity check before proceeding with the balance transfers. The card reader asked Mr W to use either of two cards to verify himself, neither of which matched the detail on the cards Mr W was holding during this transaction, so Mr W contacted Nationwide.

He initially asked for help through the webchat function of the app but, as directed by the app, telephoned Nationwide for help.

Mr W told the Nationwide call agent that he didn't like using the card reader and that he hadn't been able to as the card details the reader was asking for didn't match the cards he had.

The call agent then proceeded to successfully process two balance transfer requests and then asked if Mr W would like to set up a direct debit mandate that he could use to pay the monthly credit card payments. Mr W had asked if he could set up the direct debit himself using his app, but the agent told him this would need to be completed by a Nationwide agent. The call handler then successfully set up the direct debit mandate on Mr W's behalf.

Mr W then asked if the call agent would be looking into his concern that his banking app had asked him to verify himself, through the card reader, using card numbers that didn't match either of the ones he had but became frustrated when the call agent asked him to repeat his concerns and so he terminated the call.

Mr W complained to Nationwide. He said he wasn't happy that when asked by the app to verify his identity using the card reader it gave him two options neither of which matched either the debit card he was holding or his new credit card. Mr W explained that he had only completed two of the three balance transfers he wanted over the phone as he was frustrated with the pace of the call and its repetitive nature. And he was further frustrated as he felt the call handler hadn't understood his concerns about the app.

Nationwide responded by saying that, while it was sorry Mr W hadn't been able to complete his balance transfers using his app, it didn't think it had done anything wrong.

Nationwide went on to say that the card details Mr W had been asked to use to verify his identity were both active and were connected to the two debit accounts Mr W held with it. It said the card Mr W had, and wasn't given the option to use, had been cancelled two years previously and replaced with a card which the app had asked him to use.

Nationwide said the use of the card reader was necessary to verify identity when undertaking certain actions using the app. It also explained that the call handler was correctly following policy when she repeated the terms and conditions of the balance transfer after each transaction so, whilst it acknowledged this meant it would take longer than doing the transfers on the app, didn't think it had done anything wrong.

Mr W wasn't happy with this response and complained to this Service.

Our Investigator reviewed all the evidence available and didn't think she should ask Nationwide to do anything else. She said Nationwide's terms and conditions explained the use of a card reader to verify certain transactions on the app, and the card numbers the app asked Mr W to verify were the active one's on the two debit accounts he held.

In summary, she said while she acknowledged Mr W's frustration with having to complete the balance transfers by phone, she didn't think Nationwide had made any errors so didn't think it was fair to ask them to do anything else.

Mr W wasn't satisfied with this opinion so the complaint has been brought to me 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've first looked at the circumstances at the root of this complaint which were the card details the banking app asked Mr W to use to verify his identity before he could proceed to undertake the balance transfers.

From the evidence I've been provided with, Mr W has two debit accounts each with a card issued on them. When Mr W attempted to undertake the balance transfers using his banking app it was these active cards related to his two accounts that were presented to him as options to verify his identity.

But Mr W didn't recognise the card details. He had in his possession his new credit card and a debit card for one of his accounts showing different details. And as neither of the cards he had in his possession was able to be used by the app, Mr W needed to contact Nationwide to complete his transactions.

I know Mr W feels the two card options the app gave him to identify himself was an error but, having carefully considered the evidence, I don't agree and I'll explain why.

From the evidence available, I'm satisfied that the two cards the app asked Mr W to use to identify himself were both valid and correct. So, from this, the app was correct in asking for them to be used. I'm also aware that credit cards aren't used by Nationwide to verify customers identity on the app which explains why the credit card details weren't offered as an option. Finally, the evidence shows that the debit card Mr W was in possession of, and wished to use, had, in fact, been cancelled two years earlier and replaced by a card with the details the bank had offered as an option.

I can understand that Mr W might have forgotten about the replacement card and kept his original one as the reason for its replacement was it had been reported as lost or stolen – so he may have found it and assumed it was still valid – but as the evidence shows Nationwide’s app presented Mr W with the two active cards on his two debit accounts for him to use to verify himself, I can’t say it was a fault.

From the evidence I’ve seen, it’s clear Mr W is unhappy with the functionality of the app and feels this has led to him receiving poor service.

Mr W has commented that he was unable to use the app to set up a direct debit payment for his credit card and, also, he also dislikes the need to use the card reader as a method of verification. Mr W has also commented more widely on the need for Nationwide’s call agent to repeat the same terms and conditions relating to the balance transfer process several times in the space of a relatively short call. He feels this is unnecessary and, again, leads to a poor customer experience.

Before I comment on this, I think it would be helpful to explain the role of the Financial Ombudsman Service is to resolve individual complaints based on what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of each case. It is not for this Service to interfere with a firm’s processes, systems or controls, nor can we punish or fine a business. Those are considerations for the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), as the regulator.

I say this because my role here is not to comment on Nationwide’s processes themselves, rather to decide if they were fairly and reasonably applied in the circumstances of this complaint.

I’ve looked at the terms and conditions of Nationwide’s mobile banking app and, in section 4, it clearly explains that to execute certain actions, the app will need customer verification using a card reader. So, as these terms and conditions were provided to Mr W when he started using the app, I think it was fair for Nationwide to insist on his identity verification, using the card reader, when he wished to undertake balance transfers using the app.

Mr W has complained that he was unable to set up a direct debit on his app and this could only be done through a Nationwide agent. As I’ve explained above, it’s not my role to interfere with a firm’s systems or processes and so, given that, I don’t think I can reasonably say Nationwide acted unfairly when it told Mr W he needed to use a call agent to set up his direct debit.

Similarly, Mr W has questioned why the app didn’t allow him to verify himself using his new credit card and, further, why Nationwide insisted on its call agent repeating the same information repeatedly when it read out the balance transfer terms and agreement for each individual transfer he did with it. Mr W feels that while this may be Nationwide’s policies they are, in effect, unfair and unreasonable.

But these are the controls and processes that Nationwide have chosen to adopt to run its business in a compliant manner and, as I’ve said, it’s not my role to interfere with them. From the evidence, Nationwide appear to have consistently applied its policies, so I don’t think it acted unfairly.

In summary, I appreciate Mr W has found several of Nationwide’s processes challenging and frustrating, but it is not my role to comment or make a judgement on them. And, having carefully considered the evidence, I think Nationwide applied these processes in a correct and timely manner, so I won’t be asking it to do anything else.

My final decision

For the reasons stated above I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 25 February 2026.

Ben Castell
Ombudsman