

## **The complaint**

Mr O complains that Bank of Scotland plc trading as Halifax (Halifax) unfairly closed his account.

## **What happened**

In February 2019 Halifax wrote to Mr O giving him two months' notice that it would close his account.

Mr O complained. Halifax said that it could review an account at any time and make a decision to close it without giving any reason. It said he had made 40 previous complaints, and that on review of his account it took the view that Mr O wasn't happy banking with Halifax and that the relationship between them had broken down.

Mr O complained to us. He said he had looked at the terms and conditions and couldn't see that he'd done anything in them that would cause Halifax to close his account.

Our investigator thought that Halifax had a right to exercise a commercial decision not to bank with Mr O as long as they gave him notice, which they did. She appreciated that Halifax had addressed all of Mr O's complaints and had upheld some of them. But she thought that the bank had made it clear to him that it was due to a breakdown in the relationship. She wouldn't be asking Halifax to do anything.

Mr O disagreed and asked for a decision from an ombudsman to review his complaint. So, the matter has come to me to review.

## **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'm very aware that I've summarised the events in this complaint in far less detail than the parties and I've done so using my own words. No discourtesy is intended by me in taking this approach. Instead, I've focused on what I think are the key issues here. Our rules allow me to do this. This simply reflects the informal nature of our service as a free alternative to the courts. If there's something I've not mentioned, it isn't because I've ignored it. I'm satisfied I don't need to comment on every individual argument to be able to reach what I think is the right outcome. But I have read all Mr O's submissions.

I want to make it clear that I understand why what happened concerned Mr O. I've no doubt it would've come as quite a shock to him, and he would've been very worried to find out that Halifax had decided to close his account and how this might impact his credit file. But it's generally for banks and financial businesses to decide whether or not they want to provide, or to continue to provide, account facilities to any particular customer. Unless there's a very good reason to do so, this service won't usually say that a bank or financial business must keep customer or require it to compensate a customer who has had their account closed.

As long as banks and financial businesses reach their decisions fairly, it doesn't breach law or regulations and is in keeping with the terms and conditions of the account, then this service won't usually intervene. They shouldn't decline to continue to provide account services without proper reason, for instance of unfair bias or unlawful discrimination. And they must treat new and existing customers fairly.

Under the terms and conditions of the account Mr O held with Halifax, it was entitled to close the account on giving at least two months' notice. It gave Mr O that notice, so I can't say that it acted unfairly in processing the closure.

Halifax didn't have to give Mr O reasons for closing the account, but it has done in this case. The reasons that it gave were:

- It's clear he was unhappy with many elements of the service it's able to provide.
- It's clear the relationship had broken down irretrievably and therefore it felt it was not the right banking provider for him.

Based on all the available evidence I think Halifax acted appropriately in making the decision to close Mr O's account. I say this because I can see that Mr O has made around 40 service complaints to the bank over the last few years. I think this evidence supports the reason Halifax gave in its letter to Mr O, which is that the relationship had broken down. As Halifax is allowed to close an account for any or even no reason, as long as it is not for a reason based on unlawful discrimination, I can't say that Halifax wasn't entitled to close the account. Halifax did give Mr O two months' notice, which I think is reasonable, so I won't be asking it to do anything more.

In summary, I know this will come as a disappointment to Mr O but having considered everything, while I appreciate Mr O's strength of feeling and why he feels he's been treated unfairly, I'm not persuaded Halifax acted unreasonably or unfairly in the circumstances. So, I won't be asking Halifax to do anything.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons I've explained my final decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr O to accept or reject my decision before 12 December 2025.

Sharon Kerrison  
**Ombudsman**