

## **The complaint**

Mr R and Mrs R complain that Nationwide Building Society wouldn't help them to make a payment to existing payee details when they were on holiday.

## **What happened**

Mr R and Mrs R explain that while abroad they wanted to transfer £100 to another bank account held by Mr R on 17 April 2025. And they were told they couldn't do so as they didn't have the account card reader with them. They had to borrow money from friends for expenditure which they found embarrassing. But then on some following days they were able to make similar payments without any such check.

Nationwide said it hadn't made a mistake. The potential need for a payment to be authorised with the card reader was set out in the terms and conditions of the account. And it needed to check that payments were being made by Mr R and Mrs R. It said that it was unable to override the requirement presented at the time of the transaction. It had discussed with them the potential to set up biometric security on the mobile app.

Our investigator didn't recommend that the complaint be upheld. He said that he'd seen in information provided by Nationwide online that the card reader may be required to verify a payment. He noted that Mr R and Mrs R hadn't used the actual account card for over a month. And were accessing their account from an overseas internet address. So, Nationwide had acted proportionately. He noted that they'd be able to make the payment on a later date but at the time they'd contacted Nationwide they'd been given the right information.

Mr R and Mrs R didn't agree and wanted their complaint to be reviewed by an ombudsman.

## ***My provisional decision***

I issued a provisional decision on 2 October 2025. I set out what I said.

It's not in dispute that Nationwide state in information about the account that it might be necessary for a payment to be verified say with a card reader. And here Mr R and Mrs R didn't have the alternative of biometric security set up.

I noted that in the online chat they had with a member of staff they were told that this payment had been flagged because there had been many 'card not present' transactions. And the requirement here was made to protect them. They were told that the card and it seems account weren't blocked. I also noted from the terms and conditions of the account that one of the reasons that a payment won't be made is if Nationwide think that the account/device being used isn't secure or someone else is trying to access the account.

The statement for the account shows that payments had been made to Mr R, the payee involved, before their trip which they say didn't require the card reader. And as Mr R and Mrs R explain payments using the same details and for £100 were allowed on 19, 20 (two payments) and 23 April 2025 I understood while they were still away.

In my assessment Nationwide is reasonably entitled to set up security procedures for the account. And as here to decide on a payment-by-payment basis whether additional checks which can include the card reader are needed. Our investigator has identified that these needed to be proportionate and I agreed they do. And I said I was looking at whether the outcome of the normal process was fair and reasonable for Mr R and Mrs R in this particular case.

I didn't think it was. I made that finding for the following reasons. Nationwide had the opportunity during the contact from Mr R and Mrs R to make any security checks. It didn't for example doubt it was in genuine contact with them when openly discussing the account and this payment. It was made aware that they were abroad and didn't have access to the card reader and didn't pursue with them how as a result they would manage for funds. Or offer any exceptional measure to help them. And the security check here appeared routine and variable. That's because in exactly the same circumstances including the pattern of card not present payments and them logging in from abroad, they were able to make similar value payments over following days. If their contact with Nationwide had allowed this to happen then they weren't made aware of that and so were caused stress and worry. And I thought there were reasonable grounds to allow such future payments based on the information by then available to Nationwide. So, while this one payment couldn't it seems be made or overridden having been flagged by the system at the time, I thought that they ought reasonably to have been helped more given their specific set of circumstances.

This service doesn't make punitive awards. And I took into account that Mr R and Mrs R only seemed to have one payment method available to them and hadn't say set up biometric security. And they were reluctantly able to borrow funds for expenditure and then later make payments from this account. But I did think that the service and outcome for them was lacking for the reasons I'd given. And taking into account our published guidance about compensation I intended to require Nationwide to pay them £75 as a result.

### **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.

Mr R and Mrs R said that they accepted my provisional assessment.

Nationwide said that it didn't agree. It maintained that there was no error with the security check and that this was proportionate. Nationwide said that this check couldn't be overridden by its staff. It said it wasn't able to provide an emergency transfer as this couldn't be done by webchat. And in any event not being able to complete the card reader process wouldn't be considered an emergency. It said it was unsure why Mr R needed to borrow money as he had funds in the account and an active debit card. And he had a 'FlexPlus' account with no fees for withdrawing cash abroad. Nationwide said that it recognised their frustration at what happened but didn't agree with the impact.

I set out in my provisional decision above that I needed to consider whether the outcome of Nationwide applying its normal process was fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this case. And I noted and took into account that it had already told this service that it couldn't override a system decision. I'd also noted that Mr R and Mrs R only seemed to have one withdrawal method available to them. I took that into account when judging fair compensation. They'd not taken a card reader with them on holiday in any event.

I'd already referred to the terms and conditions of the account. And come to the view that Nationwide had confirmation of this as a genuine payment attempt even if the system couldn't be overridden at this specific time. So, there'd be reasonable grounds to allow future

such attempts. Mr R and Mrs R weren't told this causing immediate stress and worry. And in fact, future such transfers were allowed without card reader verification. They weren't offered any other help either during the online chat or by being asked to call. I accept their testimony that they were in difficulty when abroad.

Mr R had expected to be able to make relatively small transfers to an account at another financial business. And then make withdrawals from that account. That arrangement was clearly most advantageous to him. I appreciate Nationwide states that Mr R and Mrs R could as well have taken the debit card for this account so they could withdraw cash directly instead.

While it would have been helpful to them if they had done so, the position was that they hadn't. And needed help. I remain of the view that Nationwide could fairly have done more to help them as set out above. And that they were caused stress and worry in these particular circumstances and that the compensation of £75 is reasonable for that.

### **My final decision**

My decision is that I uphold this complaint and require Nationwide Building Society to pay Mr R and Mrs R £75

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R and Mrs R to accept or reject my decision before 26 November 2025.

Michael Crewe  
**Ombudsman**