

The complaint

Mr K complains that National Westminster Bank Public Limited Company (NatWest) closed his accounts without providing a proper explanation. He says this caused him unnecessary stress and worry.

What happened

Mr K had accounts with NatWest.

In June 2025, NatWest decided to review Mr K's accounts to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations.

On 25 June 2024, NatWest wrote to Mr K to let him know that following its review it had decided to close all his accounts. And gave him 90 days' notice to make alternative banking arrangements.

Mr K complained to NatWest. He said he had been a loyal customer of the bank for 40 years and wanted to know why NatWest no longer wanted him as a customer.

In response, NatWest said that it had reviewed and closed Mr K's accounts to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations. And wasn't willing to provide a further explanation.

Mr K remained unhappy and asked us to investigate his complaint. He wants NatWest to provide a proper explanation about why it closed his accounts. Mr K said NatWest's actions made him feel stressed and anxious. He said it's not right that the bank can treat a long-standing customer such as him so unfairly.

After looking at all the information the investigator said that NatWest hadn't treated Mr K unfairly when it had closed his accounts. Based on the information NatWest had shared with us in confidence they didn't recommend NatWest should do anything further to resolve Mr K's complaint.

Mr K disagreed. He wants to know why NatWest closed his account and feels very let down that the bank haven't explained why it no longer wants him as a customer after so many years.

Mr K asked for an ombudsman to review things. So the matter has come to me to decide.

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 would add too that our rules allow us to receive evidence in confidence. We may treat evidence from financial businesses as confidential for a number of reasons – for example, if

it contains information about other customers, security information or commercially sensitive information. It's then for me to decide whether it's fair to rely on evidence that only one party has seen. It's not a one-sided rule; either party to a complaint can submit evidence in confidence if they wish to, and we'll then decide if it's fair to rely on it. Here, the information is sensitive and on balance I don't believe it should be disclosed. But it's also clearly material to the issue of whether NatWest has treated Mr K fairly. So, I'm persuaded I should take it into account when deciding the outcome of the 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 K's submissions.

I want to make it clear that I understand why what happened concerned Mr K. 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 his accounts had been closed. But as the investigator has already explained, NatWest has extensive legal and regulatory responsibilities they must meet when providing account services to customers. They can broadly be summarised as a responsibility to protect persons from financial harm, and to prevent and detect financial crime.

I've considered the basis for NatWest's review and having done so I find this was legitimate and in line with its legal and regulatory obligations. So, I'm satisfied NatWest acted fairly by reviewing Mr K's accounts. I appreciate that Mr K wants to know more about why NatWest did what it did. But NatWest isn't obliged to tell Mr K why it reviewed his accounts, and I don't believe it would be appropriate for me to require it to do so as much as he'd like to know.

The result of the review was that NatWest decided they didn't want to provide financial facilities to Mr K anymore. NatWest wrote to Mr K in June 2025 to tell him that it had decided to close his accounts in 90 days.

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.

NatWest have relied on the terms and conditions when closing Mr K's accounts. I've reviewed the terms, and they explain that NatWest can close an account for any reason by giving 60 days' notice. I've seen the letter NatWest sent to Mr K giving him 90 days' notice, so I'm satisfied NatWest has complied with this part.

I've next gone on to consider whether NatWest's reason for closing the accounts was fair. In doing so, I appreciate that NatWest are entitled to set their own policies and part of that will form their risk criteria. It is not in my remit to say what policies or risk appetite NatWest

should have in place. I can however, while considering the circumstances of individual complaints, decide whether I think customers have been treated fairly.

NatWest has provided some further details of its decision-making process, which led to the closure of Mr K's accounts. I'm sorry but I can't share this information with Mr K due to its commercial sensitivity. But I've seen nothing to suggest NatWest's decision around closing Mr K's accounts was unfair. On balance when considering NatWest's wider regulatory responsibilities and all the information available to me, I find NatWest had a legitimate basis for closing Mr K's accounts. So, I can't conclude NatWest treated Mr K unfairly when it closed his accounts.

I understand of course why Mr K wants to know the exact reasons behind NatWest's decision to close his accounts. It can't be pleasant being told you are no longer wanted as a customer – especially after being a customer for long time. But NatWest doesn't disclose to its customers what triggers a review of their accounts. And it's under no obligation to tell Mr K the reasons behind the account closure, as much as he'd like to know. So, I can't say it's done anything wrong by not giving Mr K this information. And it wouldn't be appropriate for me to require it to do so now.

Mr K says NatWest closing his accounts has caused him significant problems. I do appreciate this matter would've caused some difficulty. But having looked at what's happened in this particular case I can see no basis on which I might make an award against NatWest given that I don't think it failed to properly follow its own procedures when it closed Mr K's accounts.

In summary, I recognise how strongly Mr K feels about his complaint, so I realise he will be disappointed by my decision. But overall, based on the evidence I've seen I won't be telling NatWest to do anything more to resolve Mr K's complaint.

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 K to accept or reject my decision before 16 December 2025.

Sharon Kerrison
Ombudsman