

The complaint

Ms M complains that HSBC UK Bank Plc blocked her credit card without prior notification.

What happened

Ms M holds a credit card with HSBC.

On 24 May 2024 HSBC sent a letter to Ms M regarding the persistent debt on her card. The letter advised that the card would be blocked if Ms M didn't contact the bank within 60 days.

Ms M didn't make contact with the bank, and the card was blocked.

Ms M didn't discover that her card had been blocked until June 2025. She complained to HSBC. Ms M explained that she was in financial difficulty and asked for interest to be frozen from 20 July 2024 when the card was blocked.

HSBC didn't uphold the complaint. In its final response it said it had provided adequate warning that the card would be blocked if they didn't hear from her. HSBC said the block would remain until it could assess Ms M's financial capability and asked her to contact the financial support team to conduct an income and expenditure assessment.

Ms M was unhappy with the response and brought her complaint to this service. She said she hadn't received the letter dated 24 May 2024 and said that blocking her card without warning and caused disruption to her finances. Ms M said that the interest charges applied to her account since 20 July 2024 had made her financial difficulties worse. She said she had attempted to contact HSBC's financial support team several times but hadn't received assistance.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. They said that HSBC had provided evidence to show that they had sent letters to Ms M warning her about persistent debt and asking her to get in touch. The investigator found that HSBC had kept Ms M informed and that the block had been applied fairly and in line with the terms and conditions of the account. The investigator said that interest had been applied in line with the terms and conditions of the account and that there was no evidence that Ms M had attempted to contact the financial assistance team.

Ms M didn't agree. She said that HSBC hadn't provided a direct telephone line or email for the financial support team, and it was difficult to make contact. Ms M said there should be call recordings of the contact she'd had with the financial support team.

Because Ms M didn't agree I've been asked to review the complaint.

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 know it will disappoint Ms M, but I agree with the investigator's opinion. I'll explain why.

I've reviewed the letters that were sent to Ms M between November 2022 and May 2024. The bank sent 4 letters to Ms M about the persistent debt on her account. The letters explained that Ms M was making payments of close to the minimum payment due each month which meant that more of her payments were going towards interest and charges than towards reducing the balance. The letters asked Ms M to think about increasing her monthly repayments and included details of how to contact the financial support team. The final letter – which was sent to Ms M on 29 May 2024 – advised Ms M that she needed to get in touch with HSBC within 60 days otherwise the account would be blocked for future spending.

I can't see that Ms M contacted HSBC following receipt of the letter dated 29 May 2024. Ms M has told this service that she didn't receive the letter. I've checked the address on the letter and it's correctly addressed to Ms M at her registered address. I'm satisfied that it was sent to Ms M. If Ms M didn't receive it, this isn't something I can fairly hold HSBC responsible for because HSBC are reliant on Royal Mail for delivery of correspondence.

Ms M has said that the block caused disruption to her finances. I appreciate that Ms M would've been distressed when she realised that she could no longer use her card. I've reviewed the terms and conditions of the account to decide whether HSBC acted fairly and reasonably when it blocked the card.

The terms and conditions of the account state that HSBC can suspend the use of the account where the account has been in persistent debt for two 18-month periods. Having reviewed the account, I'm satisfied that it meets the definition of persistent debt over this timescale. Therefore, I'm unable to say that HSBC has made an error or treated Ms M unfairly when it suspended the account and blocked the card.

Ms M has complained that the interest charged on her account since the card was blocked has made her financial situation worse. I've reviewed the terms and conditions of the account. These state that from the date of each transaction interest will be added until the balance has been repaid in full. I'm therefore satisfied that HSBC has charged interest on Ms M's account in line with the terms and conditions.

Ms M has said that she made attempts to contact the financial support team. This service asked HSBC to provide call recordings or live chat notes of any contact with Ms M. HSBC has replied and said it has no record of any calls from Ms M. Ms M hasn't been able to provide this service with further information on the dates when she called. I'm therefore unable to make any findings about Ms M's attempts to contact the financial support team, as there isn't enough evidence to show that Ms M made these attempts.

I appreciate that Ms M feels that she hasn't received assistance from HSBC. HSBC has provided contact details for the financial support team and I recommend that Ms M makes contact as soon as possible so that HSBC can offer her support with repaying the balance going forwards.

Taking everything into account, I'm unable to say that HSBC has made an error or treated Ms M unfairly. I'm unable to uphold the complaint.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms M to accept or reject my decision before 26 December 2025.

Emma Davy
Ombudsman