

The complaint

Mrs K and Mr S have complained that NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY ("NatWest") mis-sold them a Premier Reward Black packaged bank account on 2 December 2020.

Mrs K and Mr S have given a number of reasons why they say the account was mis-sold. These include that they were unaware their account had been changed to a Premier Reward Black account and they weren't aware they were paying a monthly fee for their account. Mrs K and Mr S also say they haven't used the benefits on the account and they say they have never met the eligibility criteria to have the account either.

What happened

After Mrs K and Mr S complained about the sale of their account, NatWest issued its final response letter on 24 June 2025 and it didn't think the account had been mis-sold. NatWest did however acknowledge that it could've handled the complaint better and so paid Mrs K and Mr S £75 to apologise for the service they received after they raised their complaint.

Following Mrs K and Mr S referring their complaint to this service, one of our investigators assessed the complaint, they didn't uphold the complaint either.

As Mrs K and Mr S didn't accept the investigators assessment, the matter was referred for an ombudsman's 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.

We've explained our approach to complaints about packaged accounts on our website and I've used that to help me decide this complaint and having considered everything, I don't uphold this complaint. I will explain why.

Firstly, I have considered whether Mrs K and Mr S were given a fair choice in upgrading their account. I understand that Mrs K and Mr S don't recall agreeing to upgrading their account and are therefore saying that it was upgraded without their consent. However, NatWest has provided evidence that Mrs K applied to upgrade her joint account with Mr S, to a Premier Reward Black account on 2 December 2020. During the application, Mrs K selected that she didn't have a need for travel insurance or breakdown cover, but she did have a need for mobile phone insurance and for home emergency cover.

So overall, although I acknowledge that Mrs K now can't remember doing so, based on the evidence I have been provided with, I am satisfied that Mrs K did apply to upgrade the account. So, I am unable to conclude that the account was upgraded without consent. And although only Mrs K applied to upgrade the account, as the joint account mandate was set up as 'one person signature', this meant that either one of the joint account holders was able to make changes to the joint account – such as changing the type of account.

Based on the evidence I have been provided with, and as Mrs K applied for the account online (rather than interacting with a NatWest staff member e.g. in branch or over the phone), I'm satisfied that the account was sold on a non-advised basis. This means that

NatWest was not obliged to check if the account was suitable for Mrs K and Mr S's circumstances. But NatWest was still required to provide Mrs K and Mr S with important information about the account and the associated benefits, so that they could make an informed decision about whether it met their needs or not.

Looking at the records that NatWest has provided from its system, it's clear that Mrs K was made aware that the Reward Black account included travel insurance, breakdown cover, mobile phone insurance and home emergency cover. I say this because I can see that Mrs K indicated in the upgrade process that she didn't need either the travel insurance or the breakdown cover included with the account and that she only had a need for the latter two benefits. But, even though Mrs K and Mr S may not have needed all of the benefits, that doesn't necessarily mean that NatWest mis-sold the packaged account. This is because, as the account is sold as a package, this means that customers can't pick and choose what it comes with. Or to put it another way, it's up to the person applying for the account to decide whether it's worth having the packaged account for the few benefits they do need. And here, clearly Mrs K was happy to proceed with the application in the knowledge that she (and Mr S) didn't necessarily need all of the account benefits.

To gain an understanding of what Mrs K was likely to have seen when she did apply for the account, I have looked at archived versions of NatWest's website from 2020. And from this I think that the monthly cost of the account (which was £31 per month at the time) and the key benefits were likely to have been made clear to Mrs K during the upgrade process.

I accept that it's possible that NatWest didn't provide Mrs K with all of the important information it should've provided about the various benefits, when Mrs K applied for the account. But I've not seen anything about their circumstances that makes me think Mrs K would've been put off from upgrading the account. For example, I note that the travel insurance doesn't include cover for pre-existing medical conditions, and it seems that sadly, Mr S was diagnosed with a serious medical condition a number of years ago. But Mrs K indicated that she didn't need the travel insurance. So, I don't think her being made aware of that exclusion would've put her off from agreeing to the account.

So in summary, I think Mrs K was provided with enough information that she had a reasonable understanding about the cost and benefits of the account. And I can see that after the sale, NatWest sent Mrs K and Mr S annual eligibility statements – with the first one issued in January 2021. These reminded them of the insurance benefits included with their account and invited them to get in contact if the account was no longer suitable for their circumstances. I can also see a summary of fees on the account was issued in February 2021. This made it clear that the recently upgraded account cost £31 per month. So I'm satisfied that NatWest did enough, after the account upgrade, to keep Mrs K and Mr S informed about their Reward Black packaged account.

One of the reasons why Mrs K and Mr S say the account is mis-sold is because they say they don't meet (and have never met) NatWest's eligibility requirements to have the account.

I understand that Mrs K and Mr S are referring specifically to NatWest's eligibility criteria for Premier banking. And it seems that, at the same time Mrs K applied for the Reward Black account, she also applied to access NatWest's Premier banking service.

Having looked into this point, I can see that Mrs K and Mr S would've needed to have earned £120,000 in the year prior to them applying, to become eligible for Premier banking.

Mrs K and Mr S say the account was mis-sold as they never met this criterion. But NatWest has confirmed that an amount in excess of £120,000 had passed through Mrs K and Mr S's account in the year before Mrs K applied to upgrade the account to a Black account.

Therefore, it seems that they did meet the criteria at the time of application, which in turn is what led to Mrs K's application for her and Mr S to become Premier banking customers being approved by NatWest.

NatWest has explained that it won't always check to see if Premier customers continue to meet the criteria. Nonetheless, even if it's the case that Mrs K and Mr S no longer meet the criteria for Premier banking in the years since 2020 - Mr S and Mrs K haven't suffered any detriment from this. This is because there is no additional cost to Mr S and Mrs K for being a Premier customer. The monthly fee they paid was for the type of packaged account they had and not because they were Premier banking customers.

As such, even if it's the case that Mrs K and Mr S no longer qualified for the Premier Banking service, I can't say that NatWest has acted unreasonably if it allowed them to retain the benefits of its Premier banking service. This is because Mrs K and Mr S are not paying for that service.

As such, for the reasons given above, I'm unable to say that the Premier Reward Black account was mis-sold.

Finally, I can see that, due to poor customer service following Mrs K and Mr S raising their complaint, Barclays acknowledged that it had not handled matters as well as it could've done. Having considered the circumstances around when Mrs K and Mr S raised their complaint, I do think that the £75 that Barclays paid them is reasonable for the distress and inconvenience that was caused to them. As such, I don't think Barclays needs to do anything more in relation to that aspect of the complaint.

My final decision

Because of the reasons given above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs K and Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 19 December 2025.

Thomas White
Ombudsman