

The complaint

Mr M complained that Bank of Scotland plc trading as Halifax should pay him more compensation after it provided a poor service when his debit card was blocked while he was trying to make an urgent purchase.

What happened

On 7 August 2025, Halifax's automated fraud-prevention systems declined a payment Mr M attempted to make as part of arranging a payment plan for a new device. A block was placed on his card pending security checks.

Mr M contacted Halifax shortly afterwards and the block was removed. But he also wished to raise a complaint and spent almost two hours on the phone as a result. By the time the call ended, the device he wanted could no longer be delivered before his departure overseas in five days' time. He bought an inferior product elsewhere instead, breaking into his savings to pay for this.

When Mr M complained, Halifax explained that its systems had operated as intended when the block was automatically applied. But it agreed that he'd been kept on the phone for longer than expected and offered him £75 to cover the inconvenience caused.

Halifax said it wasn't prepared to pay more than this because, although Mr M was unable to secure a suitable delivery date for his order after the call and collecting the device in-store wasn't an option for him, these were matters outside of Halifax's control. When Mr M later raised concerns about a delayed complaint response, Halifax said it had issued a letter the day after his call and it wasn't responsible for postal issues.

Our investigator thought Halifax's offer was fair and reasonable in these circumstances. Mr M didn't agree and asked 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.

I've independently reached the same conclusion as our investigator. I'll explain my reasons.

We can't usually look at complaints that are solely about complaint handling. The Financial Conduct Authority's rules say we can only look at complaints about regulated activities and complaint handling isn't one of those.

But I can consider the overall customer service Halifax provided to Mr M, including the time it took to deal with his call on 7 August. So this is the focus of my decision.

Halifax must meet its legal and regulatory obligations to protect customers and prevent fraud. This requires it to have systems in place to carry out security checks. Halifax has

explained its system flagged the payment and a block was applied until checks could be completed.

The account terms and conditions allow Halifax to decline payment instructions and restrict account access while security checks are carried out. So I don't think Halifax acted unfairly when it placed the block on Mr M's card.

But Halifax agreed that the time Mr M spent on the phone when speaking with its fraud team and making his complaint exceeded what Halifax would typically expect for a call of this nature. So I've thought carefully about the question of fair redress and how far it's fair to hold Halifax responsible for the consequences Mr M described — namely, losing the opportunity to buy the device he wanted before travelling.

I must be impartial and that includes considering what Mr M could reasonably have done to limit the impact of what happened on his situation. I understand that Mr M had booked his travel some time before and he'd said his existing device had been unreliable for a while. Trying to arrange a new device within a week of his planned travel date carried an element of risk. Had he started the process earlier, it's likely that he could've avoided missing the delivery deadline and the resulting issues this caused him.

To be clear, I'm not saying that Mr M was responsible for what happened. But the tight timeframe was a significant factor. And ultimately, the decision to buy an alternative device - and to do so from savings - was his choice.

Halifax however recognised its service fell short because of the extended call time and offered £75. Having considered everything, I think this is fair and proportionate. It reflects the inconvenience caused and this amount is in line with awards this service would make in similar cases. Even if it hadn't already been offered, I wouldn't ask Halifax to pay more.

Putting things right

Halifax should pay Mr M £75 compensation, if it hasn't already done so.

My final decision

My final decision is that I partially uphold this complaint and Bank of Scotland plc trading as Halifax should take the steps set out above to put things right as it has offered to do.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 19 February 2026.

Susan Webb
Ombudsman