

The complaint

Mr R complains that American Express Services Europe Limited (“AMEX”) had a poor process for setting up a direct debit, resulting in a missed payment on his credit card and an adverse marker on his credit file.

What happened

Mr R originally set up a direct debit with AMEX in February 2025. The following month Mr R cancelled it. AMEX informed Mr R that payments must be made manually, until a new direct debit was set up.

Mr R found the process overly complex and didn’t set up the direct debit until August 2025 after he’d had further contact and support from AMEX. During this period a payment was missed, resulting in a charge being applied and a notification to the credit reference agencies.

Mr R complained that AMEX had made the process too complex and says that if it was more straightforward, he wouldn’t have missed a payment.

AMEX reviewed Mr R’s complaint and didn’t uphold it. It felt that its communications with Mr R were clear and it was his responsibility to ensure payments were made.

An investigator then reviewed the merits of Mr R’s complaint and didn’t think AMEX had done anything wrong.

Mr R disagreed with our investigator’s opinion. Because an agreement couldn’t be reached, the complaint has been passed 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.

Having done so, I’m not upholding this complaint. I know this will disappoint Mr R, so I’ll explain why.

I think that AMEX was clear that Mr R would need to make manual payments until a new direct debit was set up. The evidence shows that it wrote to him on 28 March 2025 explaining what he would need to do if he wanted to set up a new direct debit, this included four different routes he could take.

AMEX also advised Mr R to pay his account, via a number of possible methods, in the absence of a direct debit.

During April and May 2025, Mr R contacted AMEX via the text chat service, to ask if a direct debit was active and on both occasions AMEX advised that there wasn’t one set up. It advised that he would need to pay the statement balance manually to avoid interest charges. On both occasions Mr R confirmed he was going to do that and the payments were processed.

It isn’t in dispute that Mr R didn’t arrange the new direct debit for around five months, so I don’t hold AMEX accountable for the consequences of any late or missed payments, because its correspondence was clear as noted above

Mr R has made numerous points in response to the investigator about his frustrations with the process AMEX had asked him to follow. He also believes that in August 2025, when the direct debit was set up, that a simpler process was made available to him through the live chat facility, and this should have been available to him from the start.

In the letter AMEX sent to Mr R on 28 March 2025, referred to above, one of the options it gave him for setting up a direct debit was "Chatting with us when logged into your account". Having reviewed the digital chat transcript over the period in question, there is no evidence that Mr R followed that route, so I think that process was always available to him.

It isn't for this service to direct a business to change its processes and AMEX have regulatory requirements to follow. Whilst Mr R's frustration is evident, AMEX provided him with support when he asked for it in August 2025 and I don't think it had done anything wrong prior to that.

So, I don't consider AMEX have treated Mr R unfairly.

I know Mr R is unhappy that this has left a negative marker on his credit file, and this may not be much consolation, but one late payment marker on an otherwise positive credit file, is unlikely to have any adverse consequences.

My final decision

For the reasons outlined above, I don't uphold this complaint against American Express Services Europe Limited.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr R to accept or reject my decision before 18 May 2026.

David Barker
Ombudsman