

The complaint

Miss B is unhappy with Lloyds Bank Plc.

Miss B has particular individual accessibility needs that means she has to do her banking arrangements in a specific way. Miss B no longer has a carer and due to some of her conditions this does make it difficult for her sometimes to communicate. Miss B has found she's been unable to use the Lloyds automated service to pay bills and pay for food due to the difficulties she has encountered.

What happened

Miss B has had situations when she has needed to pay bills and pay for food but the Lloyds telephone service has closed for the day or there are no advisers available. Miss B said she has on occasion had to rely on a pensioner having enough money in their own account to be able to buy food for her.

Miss B said bills have been difficult to pay and this impacts on her reputation.

Miss B wants Lloyds to offer a reliable banking service that she can use in a way and at a time that she wants to. Miss B has found life very difficult due to the problems she has faced with her Lloyds banking arrangements. She also advised Lloyds that she found it difficult to cope with the background noise in its office when she was on a call to it.

Initially, Lloyds offered Miss B £40 after Miss B said she had to pay an additional £5 late payment fee as she hadn't been able to make a payment on time due to the system issues. Miss B declined this and Lloyds increased the offer to £80 which Miss B again declined. When the complaint reached this service Lloyds apologised and said the service provided should have been better. It paid £255 into Miss B's account as an apology for the service and the inconvenience caused. £5 of this was to cover the late payment fee.

Lloyds reviewed its automated service and said it hadn't been able to reach the higher level of security on checks for Miss B as it couldn't recognise if she was calling from her registered mobile number it has recorded for her. Lloyds said Miss B needed to call from this registered number. The dates that there was a problem on with these calls showed that the caller ID was anonymous or withheld meaning that Lloyds couldn't ensure Miss B reached the higher security level to allow certain banking functions to take place.

Miss B remained unhappy and brought her complaint to this service.

Our investigator upheld the complaint. She said Lloyds was right to now offer suitable compensation for the inconvenience caused and said the amount offered once the complaint had reached this service was fair and reasonable. She agreed that it was correct to pay the late payment fee too. But she accepted Lloyds point about calls coming from a withheld or unrecognised number. As Lloyds couldn't verify the number this forced Miss B into having to discuss security with advisers which Miss B found upsetting and tiring. But our investigator said that she couldn't say Lloyds was at fault for this. It was acting to protect Miss B and her money.

Miss B didn't accept this and asked for her complaint to be passed to an ombudsman for a final 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.

Even though I have read and reviewed all of the evidence provided I will mainly stick to commenting on what I see as the main elements of Miss B's complaint.

It is clear and understandable that Miss B has found this whole situation very upsetting and extremely frustrating. With Miss B stating she no longer has a carer to support her, life has clearly become more difficult. Miss B has been clear that due to her conditions she can't use the online Lloyds banking system. But I can only find Lloyds responsible for the things it is in control of.

In view of the further issues with the automated system Miss B has been struggling to pay her bills as she has been unable to transfer funds to volunteers who help by paying these bills for her.

With this not working as it should Miss B said people have had to buy food for her out of their own pockets. She noted Lloyds had written to her, but she is unable to access letters, struggles with emails as she no longer has any specific support.

Miss B said Lloyds could have told her a lot earlier that the problem was to do with the number she was calling from. This could have saved a lot of difficulty as it continued to send her emails and letters that she can't access. Miss B also said she wasn't looking for money as compensation. What she wants is a reliable service.

On Miss B's point about a quieter line or a personal account manager Lloyds said, *"We do aim to limit the amount of background noise on our calls, however, this isn't always possible with a call centre environment."* Lloyds also said *"We do not have a facility to offer a personal banker at this time."* Lloyds said on the call where Miss B specifically found the background too noisy the adviser said he couldn't move to a quieter area. But that he could put Miss B through to a colleague whose background was less noisy. The adviser then called through to this colleague and explained the situation before transferring the call. Lloyds confirmed it doesn't have a specialist team but said all staff can help its customers.

Miss B said the problems impacted her health further and she felt overwhelmed.

Lloyds said Miss B had indicated she wanted to be compensated for the problems she had encountered. It had apologised and accepted where it had made mistakes. It refunded the late payment fee and felt the further £250 compensation covered the delays and issues it was responsible for. It accepted it could have informed Miss B earlier what the issues were.

Lloyds did review the automated system logs and maintained the issue was around security and the number Miss B was calling from being withheld or anonymous. It said this was the clear reason why it was making it more difficult for Miss B to make payments. It said the system was working correctly and there was no malfunction.

It said if Miss B could make sure the caller ID function was visible this would *"support successful use of the automated service in future."*

Lloyds said in one especially long call with Miss B she spoke about the lack of support from her local authority. In that call Lloyds felt obliged to contact the police due to her welfare. It said the police were arranging someone to visit her to see if she was okay and if they could offer support.

Lloyds detailed various calls and dates these calls occurred on with Miss B. Lloyds confirmed it reviewed all the calls and as Miss B has explained her personal situation and circumstances colleagues have adapted the way they speak to try and make things easier for Miss B. It said staff had been helpful and professional and they understood Miss B's frustration. It noted *"Losing her carer has had a big impact on Miss B. All of her support needs are noted on our systems and our colleagues are always on hand to discuss specific needs or answer queries. We have supported Miss B in the past and we have also contacted local authorities on her behalf when we have had concerns for her welfare."*

Lloyds also mentioned other options that it said might work for Miss B. It said she may wish to consider arranging for her friend to get a *"Trusted Person Card."* It said *"this would allow her friend to pay for the shopping with a card linked to Miss B's account so she wouldn't need to transfer the money."*

It said it offered,

"Debit card to support customers who may be unable to leave the house and may require support with shopping for essentials and access to cash through a cash machine."

The card can be given to a trusted person to conduct cash machine withdrawals and contactless Chip and PIN transactions as instructed by the customer up to the weekly limits applied."

The card can be provided to different people at separate times."

The customer can give the card to a trusted person of any age however we suggest they don't give it to anyone under 11 years old."

Lloyds said there were weekly limits on transactions of £100 from a cashpoint/ATM and for point of sale or contactless purchases at the same amount for the trusted person.

It continued,

"We also offer Trusted Person Alerts."

If a customer is struggling to manage their finances on their own, for example, they've missed payments due to low account balance, or they're worried this will happen, the bank can offer to share some limited alerts with a trusted person (TP)."

By nominating a TP the customer authorises the bank to send SMS text messages to the person supporting them when something happens on their account that might indicate a stressful situation for the customer, or that they might come to some harm."

The TP can then support the customer by checking in with them to see if they need any support. For example, helping them move money around their accounts to make sure they're covered for upcoming bills or day to day spending needs."

The customer and the TP decide in advance, which types of alerts to switch on together."

This service is useful for vulnerable customers, or customers who may need support from a friend or family member with their finances, but don't want to give up access or control of their accounts.

Ideally, the best way forward would be for Miss B to change her phone settings or appoint a Power of Attorney to help her however I appreciate this may not be possible."

Lloyds concluded by saying Miss B could call it to arrange either of these options if she thought it would be helpful.

For whatever reason the issues with the automated system were unclear to both Lloyds and Miss B at the outset. So, I'm glad Lloyds through its IT department has managed to get to the bottom of it.

Hopefully now the parties are aware of the situation Miss B will be able to use the system as she had done in the past with the minimum of fuss. This should avoid the sort of contact Miss B has particularly found difficult to contend with.

I understand Miss B's wish to use the service out of hours but this doesn't appear to be something Lloyds offers. I'm afraid my remit doesn't allow me to insist Lloyds change its processes. I note in a previous call to our investigator Miss B was provided with details of the regulator if she wished to contact the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

I don't think Lloyds acted unfairly and unreasonably based on the system it has in place to verify customers to the higher level of security. It has regulatory rules and guidelines to follow in relation to customers money and it has followed these. Although I accept and understand the upset this caused Miss B I think the recorded phone number point made by Lloyds that explains the reason for the heightened security is a fair one.

Lloyds said if Miss B is able to ensure the number isn't withheld or unrecognised this shouldn't cause problems in the future.

I think the £250 goodwill gesture, plus the £5 for the late payment is a fair and reasonable outcome. It shows Lloyds accept it had made errors in its service and it had been slow to work out what was causing the problem. I know Miss B told this service it wasn't money she was looking for it was decent service. But I hope with the facts now known and in view of the problems I think in the circumstances this is the right outcome.

If the system still isn't working in a way Miss B needs, then perhaps the offers made around the trusted person option might help her in the future if she wishes to explore that. I realise Miss B has suffered a terrible time during these problems but only some of them are down to the bank and these are the only things I can link to it. Miss B being unable to get to her post, the lack of support for her in understanding her emails, the fact Miss B can't use internet banking are all unfortunate and have added to Miss B's difficulties but I can't add any blame onto Lloyds for the circumstances Miss B finds herself in.

Putting things right

Lloyds Bank Plc was right to eventually offer the total compensation amount of £255 which it has now paid.

My final decision

I uphold this complaint.

Lloyds Bank Plc was right to eventually offer the total compensation amount of £255 which it has now paid.

I make no further award against Lloyds Bank Plc.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss B to accept or reject my decision before 16 January 2026.

John Quinlan
Ombudsman