

The complaint

Mr A complains that HSBC UK Bank Plc refused to accept a cash deposit he wanted to make into his currency account.

What happened

Mr A visited a branch of HSBC on a Wednesday in mid-September 2025 to deposit a large amount of US dollars in cash into his currency account. HSBC said they couldn't accept the deposit as it was more than their daily limit would allow. Mr A wasn't happy with this so they said they'd seek guidance and contact him the following day. Mr A used HSBC's chatbot service the next day and then called HSBC that evening as he'd not heard anything from the branch. The call handler advised Mr A to visit the branch again the next day. Mr A went into the branch on that Friday as advised but HSBC again refused to accept the cash deposit. They said the deposit exceeded the limits on his account.

Mr A called HSBC on the same day to raise a complaint. He said he was assured there were no limits or restrictions on cash deposits and he wanted a full written statement to explain why he wasn't allowed to deposit the cash into his account.

HSBC said the decision about whether to accept a deposit ultimately rests with the branch and they didn't think the branch had made an error. They said the deposit was initially rejected as the counter staff wanted to refer the matter to a manager for further guidance. The manager then reviewed the terms and conditions of the account and decided the size of the deposit was larger than the daily deposit limit for that type of account. She also wasn't happy with the documentation Mr A had provided about the source of the funds. HSBC apologised if Mr A was expecting a call on the Thursday but they were seeking further guidance and didn't have a decision until the next day. Mr A then returned to the branch before they had the opportunity to contact him themselves.

Our investigator didn't think HSBC had acted unfairly and so didn't think it needed to do anything more. As Mr A remained unhappy, his complaint has been passed to me to make 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.

I'd like to reassure Mr A that if I haven't mentioned a particular point or piece of evidence, it isn't because I haven't seen it or thought about it. It's just that I don't feel I need to reference it to explain my decision. This isn't intended as a discourtesy and is rather a reflection of the informal nature of our service.

The terms and conditions of Mr A's HSBC account includes the following, under "Foreign currency cash payments":-

“There are restrictions on the amount of foreign currency cash you can pay into your bank account each day. We’ll tell you what these are when you’re depositing foreign currency cash.”

This is reiterated under the “How can you make payments?” section further on in the terms and conditions where HSBC set out the extra terms for particular accounts, including their currency account. This section includes the following:-

“There may be limits on the amount you’re able to deposit each day.”

So, it’s clear to me that HSBC have limits on the amount of foreign currency cash that can be deposited each day. They also have some discretion around those limits. They’ve told me the daily limit that they apply in these circumstances but have said they’re unable to share that with Mr A as it’s commercially sensitive. And I can’t share that information with Mr A for the same reason. What I can say is that I’m satisfied the amount Mr A wanted to deposit was above that daily limit. So, on the face of it, HSBC acted fairly in declining the deposit Mr A was trying to make.

But Mr A has rightly said that banks are required to treat customers fairly and provide services with reasonable care and skill. Under the Financial Conduct Authority’s Consumer Duty for example, HSBC has a responsibility to act in good faith towards retail consumers and enable them to pursue their financial objectives. And in situations like this where HSBC does have some discretion, I’d expect them to carefully consider the circumstances, weigh up the risks and reach a decision that is fair and reasonable. Have HSBC done that? On balance, and based on the evidence provided, I think they have. Let me explain why.

When Mr A first visited a branch of HSBC and asked to deposit the large amount of cash he had with him, the counter staff declined the deposit as it was above their daily limit. The evidence I’ve seen indicates Mr A was told the reason it was declined. As Mr A wasn’t satisfied with this, the counter staff took copies of the documents he provided and said they’d need to seek further guidance before getting back to him. In the circumstances, I think that was a fair thing to do at that stage.

The counter staff sought guidance from the branch manager and the branch manager then sought advice from another team within HSBC. They then had a discussion about Mr A’s circumstances on Friday morning. That discussion included consideration of the amount Mr A wanted to deposit and the documentation he’d provided to evidence the source of those funds. I’m satisfied from the evidence I’ve seen they did consider the relevant circumstances and weighed the risks of accepting the cash in light of the terms of Mr A’s account and their internal procedures. As such, I think they exercised their discretion fairly and I’m satisfied their decision to decline Mr A’s deposit was fair.

Other issues

Mr A was also unhappy that HSBC said they would contact him on the Thursday following his visit to the branch on Wednesday, but then failed to do that. HSBC explained that while they intended to contact Mr A on Thursday, the branch manager wasn’t able to discuss the situation with the other team until Friday morning. Mr A then visited the branch again before they had an opportunity to call him back. HSBC apologised for not calling Mr A on Thursday and said they’d provided feedback to the branch that it would have been better had they given him a courtesy call on Thursday to advise him they were still reviewing his case.

I recognise Mr A was frustrated by the delay in hearing back from HSBC. But the delay was short and I think an apology was an appropriate way of putting things right in the circumstances. I don’t think they need to do anything more.

Mr A also said he'd been assured in one of the calls with HSBC that there were no limits or restrictions on cash deposits. I've listened to the calls Mr A had with HSBC in this period. The call handlers did empathise with his situation and couldn't understand why the branch hadn't given Mr A an explanation for not accepting the deposit. But I didn't hear the call handlers reassure Mr A there were no limits on cash deposits. So, I don't think they made any mistakes or provided a poor service in that regard.

My final decision

HSBC Bank UK Plc has already apologised to Mr A for the delay in contacting him, and I think that's a fair way to resolve this matter in all the circumstances. So, I don't think it needs to do anything more.

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

Richard Walker
Ombudsman