

## **The complaint**

Mrs D complains that HSBC UK Bank Plc unfairly made a referral to authorities following its contact with her.

## **What happened**

Mrs D complained to HSBC after the bank initiated a police visit and contact from social services. She says this caused embarrassment, anxiety and distress – particularly because of her vulnerabilities. Mrs D also requested that her account be closed. HSBC explained that it had concerns about the safety and usage of Mrs D's account, so it acted as part of its responsibility to protect her – in line with the banking protocol. The bank explained that it couldn't close the account until Mrs D cleared her overdraft balance.

Remaining unhappy, Mrs D referred her complaint to this service. One of our investigators concluded that HSBC acted fairly. Mrs D disagreed and asked for a final decision. So the complaint has been passed to me.

## **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 because:

- HSBC is under a duty to identify and prevent financial crime against customer accounts. Under the banking protocol and as part of this responsibility, HSBC can make referrals to the police and social services. I appreciate this experience was distressing and difficult to deal with for Mrs D, but I'm satisfied HSBC acted reasonably and within the parameters of its duties.
- HSBC has provided some further details of its decision-making process which led to its referral to the police and social services. Unfortunately, I can't share details of this due to its commercial sensitivity. But I haven't seen anything that leads me to conclude that HSBC acted unfairly.
- I understand that Mrs D asked HSBC to close her account due to her dissatisfaction at the time. However, I don't think it's unreasonable that HSBC declined to do so until the outstanding overdraft balance was paid off. Ultimately, the balance consists of funds Mrs D has borrowed from the bank. As with any debt, Mrs D is liable to repay this balance. So I think it's fair that HSBC expects her to do so.

- I acknowledge the concerns raised by Mrs D's representative about the distress he experienced alongside Mrs D. But, under our rules, the eligible complainant here is Mrs D. So I can only consider the impact of HSBC's actions on her. Although I empathise with Mrs D for the distress she experienced, given I've concluded that HSBC acted fairly, I won't be making an award or asking the bank to take any further action in relation to this matter.

### **My final decision**

For the reasons explained above, I'm not upholding this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs D to accept or reject my decision before 27 February 2026.

Abdul Ali  
**Ombudsman**