

The complaint

Mrs L complains about the service she received from members of staff at a branch of The Co-operative Bank P.L.C. And a discrepancy of £60 in a cash deposit the same day. I sent the parties a provisional decision on 6 January 2026, in which I set out the following background information to the complaint and my provisional findings, as follows:

‘What happened

Mrs L deposited a large sum of cash at a branch of Co-op, which she said she had sorted in readiness. Unfortunately, there was a discrepancy of £60. Mrs L said the cashier she spoke to was rude and she complained. Co-op’s branch manager later called Mrs L and said the till was up by £60, which must be hers, and offered £50 compensation for the error.

Mrs L said she had two further calls in which the manager alleged she had tried to involve other customers in her situation which Mrs L said was totally untrue and hurtful. Mrs L said she only spoke to her husband in branch and after witnessing the rudeness of the cashier he went to find a manager. Mrs L said the manager was very condescending during the calls prompting her to complain further, though she was investigating Mrs L’s complaint.

Co-op responded that there had been a misunderstanding between Mrs L and branch staff as to the need for a payment slip and to have her cash organised in bundles. Co-op said a discrepancy of £60 was due to a bank error when the cash was counted by its cashier. Co-op said its branch manager reviewed CCTV footage of Mrs L’s visit and said its cashier was professional and did her utmost to help. Co-op didn’t have a recording of its manager’s calls with Mrs L as these aren’t recorded at the branch. Co-op apologised that Mrs L found the manager to be dismissive and defensive and re-iterated her offer of £50 compensation.

Mrs L wasn’t satisfied with this response and referred her complaint to our service. She said the cash was bundled correctly, contrary to what was suggested, and she hadn’t involved other customers in the situation. She wanted £250 compensation and formal apologies from the cashier and branch manager for the distress and inconvenience caused.

Our investigator didn’t recommend the complaint be upheld. He couldn’t verify the tone or content of the calls and said there is no evidence of misconduct about Co-op’s cashier. He said Mrs L’s concern about how the cash was bundled can’t be confirmed as the CCTV footage isn’t available as its only stored for 30 days. This also meant the allegation of Mrs L’s interaction with other customers couldn’t be substantiated.

The investigator said Mrs L experienced a lapse in service during her branch visit and in subsequent interactions. He said despite a lack of evidence Co-op had investigated and while we can’t require personal apologies, the Co-op had apologised and offered £50, which he thought, in the absence of a financial loss, is fair and in line with our guidance.

Mrs L disagreed with the investigator and requested an ombudsman review her complaint. She said she was left distressed by Co-op’s poor service and spent considerable time on her complaint. She said she had never agreed with the branch manager that her complaint was resolved and had the CCTV been retained it would have supported her account.

Mrs L said the cash discrepancy; having to go back to collect her £60; the acknowledged poor service; lost evidence, and damaging accusations put her complaint well above a token £50. She said there was no misunderstanding involving customers, as no such incident occurred, yet the manager stated a customer had complained about her.

What I've decided – and why

It is always regrettable when we see a straightforward process such as paying cash into an account, going wrong. I sympathise with Mrs L for the frustration and distress she has experienced. It's our role to identify if a business has made a mistake and if so, look at the impact this has had on the consumer.

It is clear that Mrs L had not completed a deposit slip as required by Co-op. Mrs L wasn't aware of this requirement until informed by the cashier and it appears that at this point the interaction deteriorated and Mrs L wanted to speak to a manager. The cashier completed the slip, but in error. I can see that this caused Mrs L frustration, and inconvenience in having to return to the branch to collect her money.

From this it is clear that Co-op made mistakes. They acknowledged that they should have accurately recorded Mrs L's cash deposit and that they provided other poor service. Co-op apologised to Mrs L and for the misunderstanding involving other customers.

Mrs L said the £50 compensation offered by Co-op is inadequate for what has happened to her and should be £250. I have looked at each part of Mrs L's complaint to see what compensation would be fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

It is worth noting that where evidence is incomplete, inconclusive or contradictory, I have to make decisions on the balance of probabilities – that is, what I consider is more likely than not to have happened in light of the available evidence and circumstances. It's extremely difficult to make a finding on something which happened face-to-face – especially when the accounts of both parties differ and there is no independent evidence. Also worth noting is that we don't award costs for the effort and frustration involved in bringing a complaint.

The lack of CCTV footage means I am unable to decide whether the cash presented by Mrs L to the cashier was bundled or not, and whether the attitude and service from the cashier was rude and dismissive as Mrs L suggests. This is a pity as Co-op's branch manager relied on the footage to support Co-op's response to the complaint.

The branch manager said the CCTV footage wasn't retained because she felt her call with Mrs L resolved the complaint. There's no evidence of this by way of communication from Co-op and it is denied by Mrs L who said she felt the manager, 'was biased in favour of her cashier and very dismissive of my concerns'. Besides this, Mrs L reiterated her complaint by letter to the branch two weeks after she complained on the day of her visit, so the manager ought to have been aware the complaint was still open and ought to have retained the CCTV footage.

In general, it makes sense to retain CCTV footage whatever may or may not appear to be resolved in subsequent communications about a complaint. I think Co-op should adopt this approach as guidance to branch managers and staff.

Co-op sent its final response to Mrs L three months after she complained and advised that she could refer the complaint to our service. A business is usually allowed eight weeks to respond to a complaint and Co-op was well outside this timescale. Although the delay hasn't impacted Mrs L's ability to refer her complaint to this service, it was frustrating for Mrs L and may have contributed to the lack of CCTV footage.

Mrs L was also concerned that her calls with the branch manager were not recorded or retrievable. We have to accept that Co-op does not record branch calls but this makes it impossible for me to decide on Mrs L's unhappiness about the manager's perceived condescension and unfairness to her.

During these calls Mrs L was upset by the manager saying that whilst in branch Mrs L had involved other customers in her situation. Mrs L said only her husband approached her in branch and then sought assistance due to the way she was spoken to by the cashier. Mrs L advised that the branch manager retracted these critical comments. I think these were baseless and hurtful remarks to a customer who was already upset about the service she had received and should not have been made without some substantiation from others.

In conclusion, I'm pleased Co-op apologised to Mrs L for the initial error regarding the £60 discrepancy. Some aspects of the complaint such as the tone of the calls and the handling of the cash could not be independently verified due to the absence of recordings and CCTV footage. I agree with Mrs L that the CCTV footage should not have been deleted. And I am critical of Co-op's handling of her complaint.

I'm pleased that Mrs L has not been financially affected but I can see she has been distressed by the false allegation of involving other customers in branch about her situation and inconvenienced by having to return to the branch to collect her money.

I don't think Co-op's offer of £50 compensation adequately reflects the impact of what happened to Mrs L. I think compensation totalling £200 would be fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. Our guidance says this is fair where moderate distress, repeated mistakes, or significant wasted effort has been incurred.'

My provisional decision and the parties' responses

I provisionally decided that the complaint be upheld and intended to require Co-op to pay Mrs L £200 compensation (including the £50 already offered) for the distress and inconvenience caused by its poor service.

Mrs L responded to say she appreciated the thoroughness of the review. She feels that the video evidence from the branch would have substantiated her concerns and had been deliberately deleted. She said this was the first time she had felt compelled to involve our service in her dealings over many years with Co-op, which reflected the level of injustice she felt throughout this experience.

Co-op responded to say that it wouldn't challenge these findings.

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 have thought again about Mrs L's complaint and the issues involved and I have considered the responses to my provisional decision. Having done so I remain of the view that Mrs L's complaint should be upheld and for the reasons set out within my provisional decision. I take Mrs L's point about the deletion of the CCTV footage by Co-op and agree with her that this should not have happened. Our service does not penalise businesses for regulatory failings as that is the role of the Financial Conduct Authority.

Putting things right

In conclusion, Co-op provided poor service to Mrs L which was compounded by its view of her conduct in branch. I remain of the view that £200 compensation is fair and reasonable for the impact of what happened to Mrs L. Compensation of £200 is consistent with our guidance for complaints involving 'moderate distress, repeated mistakes, or significant wasted effort has been incurred.'

I hope Mrs L's dealings with Co-op run much more smoothly in future.

My final decision

For the reasons I have given here and in my provisional decision, Mrs L's complaint is upheld. I require The Co-operative Bank P.L.C. to pay Mrs L £200 compensation (to include the £50 Co-op has already offered) for the distress and inconvenience caused to her by its poor service.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs L to accept or reject my decision before 18 February 2026.

Andrew Fraser
Ombudsman