

The complaint

Mr M complains that HSBC UK Bank Plc gave him conflicting information about the status of his balance transfer and failed to cater for his accessibility requirements.

What happened

Mr M says he called HSBC in May 2025 because a balance transfer had been processed after he'd cancelled it. He says HSBC said it would reverse it and cancel the card. When this didn't happen, Mr M says he called HSBC again on 19 June 2025 as payments were being collected and he had also made the balance transfer elsewhere. He says he was on the phone for around three hours but was repeatedly cut off and spoken to rudely. Mr M says the issue remains unresolved and is affecting his cashflow management. He adds that his accessibility needs (due to hearing loss) have not been met and the whole experience has been very stressful at a time when he's grieving the loss of his father.

HSBC says the balance transfer was requested as part of Mr M's original card application on 14 May 2025. It says that this included a disclaimer to say the request couldn't be cancelled or reversed, but, nevertheless, it requested the reversal from the other card provider on 20 June 2025. HSBC says it will refund the transfer fee once the transaction has been reversed, but, in the meantime, it offered Mr M £150 for the distress caused by failing to adequately address his accessibility needs.

Mr M says the offer of £150 compensation is insufficient, especially given the issue remains unresolved, his complaint has been poorly handled, and HSBC has not made any attempt to make reasonable adjustments for him.

Our investigator recommended the complaint should be upheld. She found that Mr M had been misinformed about the status of his balance transfer, received a final response from HSBC before it had resolved the issue and was not able to access consistent customer service due to poor knowledge and understanding from HSBC staff. Our investigator considered £300 was a more appropriate level of compensation.

HSBC responded to accept the investigator's view.

Mr M responded to say, in summary, that £300 was still insufficient given there were two distinct aspects to his complaint:

- Continual misinformation about the status of the balance transfer:
 - This resulted in two card balances and unnecessary additional payments;
 - Mr M needed to contact HSBC repeatedly with the associated stress and inconvenience;

- Accessibility failures:
 - Repeated direction to use phone services and lack of knowledge of the relay service;
 - Incorrectly refusing to speak with his husband – the only practical alternative given HSBC’s accessibility limitations.

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.

Balance Transfer

Mr M applied for the card and the associated balance transfer on 14 May 2025. As the balance transfer team could not proceed without the card being activated, HSBC sent Mr M a letter on 17 May 2025 to ask him to activate the card. The card was then activated on 22 May 2025, and the balance transfer was processed the following day.

That said, I acknowledge that Mr M said he called to confirm the cancellation of the balance transfer request on or around 21 May 2025. I have also seen the online chat from 19 June 2025 where he says *“When I activated the card in the app I was prompted to okay the balance transfer. It was at that point it said there would be a fee. I then said no <to> the balance transfer. I then chatted to someone and cancelled the card.”*

HSBC has now shared the screens that Mr M would have gone through when activating his card and I’ve seen evidence to show that neither the balance transfer, nor the fee, is mentioned as part of that process.

HSBC also said it had no record of Mr M making contact to cancel the balance transfer prior to 19 June 2025 and has sent its contact logging details as evidence of this. However, it agreed to reverse the transaction and raised a recall request on 20 June 2025. It said it chased the funds several times and they were finally returned on 28 July 2025. HSBC then refunded the balance transfer and fee to Mr M’s credit card with the credit balance subsequently being returned to his current account.

I find HSBC acted fairly by agreeing to cancel the balance transfer when it did, and by refunding the fee.

However, I acknowledge that the process took some time and, although Mr M didn’t suffer a financial loss, the unresolved issues and communication difficulties caused him significant stress and inconvenience, particularly given his recent bereavement.

Accessibility

I have listened to the calls that Mr M made via the Relay UK system and:

- He was twice cut off during a call;
- One of the agents appeared not to know how to use Relay UK;

- On at least two occasions he was advised to use the telephone system;
- He spent 2.5 hours in total addressing the issue.

Indeed, I also understand Mr M's frustration that Relay UK is not always available immediately and that HSBC told him, incorrectly, that it could not speak with his husband.

Putting things right

So, I have considered the level of compensation within the context of the awards that this service usually makes in these circumstances:

"An award between £100 and £300 might be fair where there have been repeated small errors, or a larger single mistake, requiring a reasonable effort to sort out. These typically result in an impact that lasts a few days, or even weeks, and cause either some distress, inconvenience, disappointment or loss of expectation."

I'm satisfied that Mr M's redress should be at the top end of the above category and, therefore, I find £300 to be fair and reasonable in all the circumstances of his complaint.

My final decision

My decision is that I uphold this complaint. HSBC UK Bank Plc should pay Mr M a total of £300 for the reasons outlined above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 4 March 2026.

Amanda Williams
Ombudsman