

The complaint

Miss P complained about the service provided by NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY (NatWest), saying:

- she'd been given only limited information about unidentified transactions on her account that she didn't report or know anything about that led to NatWest sending her a replacement card in September 2025
- she was worried that this was the second time in a few months that her account was compromised after three fraudulent transactions appeared on her account in July 2025
- Nat West was unhelpful when her debit card stopped working whilst she was abroad
- NatWest said what happened was her fault because she'd tried to use a card that it had replaced with a new one – which Miss P said she hadn't requested and never received.

What happened

When Miss P complained, NatWest didn't agree it had done anything wrong. It mainly said

- it wasn't always possible for NatWest to prevent all fraudulent debit card transactions before they occur. But its fraud prevention systems did highlight three payments in July 2025 and, as soon as Miss P confirmed she hadn't authorised them, it promptly refunded all three payments to her account.
- As her debit card had been compromised it was necessary for NatWest to issue her a new card.
- While abroad Miss P had been using the compromised card that was stopped although she'd already been issued with a further new card before she went away.

Our investigator reviewed the case and concluded NatWest had acted correctly in July and September 2025 when replacing Miss P's debit cards. Although there were some poor-service issues - particularly when NatWest provided out-of-date information about its replacement card process - the investigator felt the £200 compensation offered was fair.

Miss P disagreed and asked for an Ombudsman review. She mainly said (in brief summary) that service failures and their impact on her hadn't been fully recognised and £200 didn't fairly reflect the cumulative effect of:

- repeated card compromise within a short period
- incorrect information from the bank
- poor communication
- significant distress experienced during recovery from serious medical treatment
- loss of confidence in her bank and the time and effort spent pursuing two complaints.

So the complaint came to me to decide.

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've carried out an independent review and having done so, I've reached the same conclusion as our investigator. I'll explain my reasons.

I appreciate how strongly Miss P feels about the way NatWest has handled her concerns and she has unanswered questions and been told contradictory information. The crux of Miss P's complaint, as I understand it, is that she wants compensation to reflect the full impact of the distress and anxiety she experienced.

To uphold this complaint there would have to be persuasive evidence showing it's more likely than not that NatWest acted wrongly, unfairly or unreasonably and that this caused some detriment to Miss P and that NatWest hasn't done enough to put things right. That is the focus of my decision.

Miss P's compromised cards

This complaint involves three debit cards issued to Miss P – which I'll call Card A, Card B and Card C.

Miss P had been using Card A since December 2023. In July 2025 she noticed three transactions she didn't recognise. NatWest refunded these and issued Card B.

NatWest receives limited information from a national fraud-alert service. In September 2025 it received a notification that Card B — the card Miss P was using — was potentially compromised. So it issued Card C to Miss P.

It's understandable that Miss P feels concerned about the security of her card details. But NatWest won't always know, or be able to explain, how someone else might have obtained those details. The July transactions were attempted online payments and Miss P had previously used her card online - so her details could have been accessed in a number of ways, including through a data breach unconnected to NatWest.

I haven't seen anything to suggest the security breach happened at NatWest. And NatWest did what I'd expect to see when Miss P phoned about this – taking action immediately to protect the money in Miss P's account by blocking the card so it couldn't any longer be used.

It promptly refunded the fraudulent transactions and it issued her a replacement card – Card B.

Miss P was using Card B when NatWest was notified that her card was on a list of potentially compromised cards – so it took action to protect her account again. NatWest has a process in place to deal with this situation. This involves issuing a new card to the account holder and stopping the old card from working ten days later.

So although it's unfortunate that Miss P found her card was twice compromised in such a short space of time, I don't find that NatWest was responsible for this happening – and it acted promptly to protect the money in her account and get a new card to her. So I can't fairly hold NatWest responsible for how upsetting all this was for Miss P.

NatWest's records show that the new card (Card C) was issued on 11 September – so Card B was due to stop working ten days later after 21 September. And that's what seems to have happened.

Miss P has sent me screenshots showing that she was able to continue using Card B for transactions up to and including 21 September. Some items she'd ordered weren't shown posted on her app until the next day, but the information I've seen suggests that NatWest did correctly apply its process and stop Card B from being used after 21 September. And it sent her Card C.

Although Miss P said she didn't request or receive a new card, NatWest automatically stops an existing card when there's a suspected fraud report and issues the customer with a replacement. This seems reasonable to me as it balances convenience for the customer with the bank's legal and regulatory obligations to protect customer funds.

NatWest issues new cards attached to a covering letter that explains the old card should be destroyed and the new card used. Although she doesn't recall receiving this, it's clear that Miss P did receive Card C as records show that she first used it for a transaction on 14 September (before she went on holiday).

What happened on holiday

It appears Miss P attempted to use Card B while abroad, even though she had already started using Card C and Card B should have been destroyed. This is why Card B wasn't working and why it was retained by a cash machine.

Miss P also froze Card C herself using her app. So although I'm very sorry for the difficulties she experienced while abroad, particularly given her recent major surgery, I can't fairly hold NatWest responsible when it had already issued a replacement card and she was using the wrong one.

Customer service

NatWest has accepted that some aspects of its customer service fell below standard. It incorrectly told Miss P that cards remain active for seven days after a replacement is issued but that was out of date information – it should have said the period is ten days. This understandably caused confusion, though it doesn't change the overall outcome because Miss P was already using Card C.

NatWest's process also includes sending an in-app notification or text alert when a card is at risk. I don't know whether Miss P can still view that alert. But she did receive her physical replacement card and her digital-wallet details were updated — which may explain why the PIN (Personal Identification Number) she tried abroad didn't match Card C.

So I've thought about the question of fair redress.

Fair compensation

I haven't been provided with anything to show that Miss P is significantly out of pocket as a result of any poor service on the part of NatWest. But compensation needs to reflect the wider impact on Miss P of avoidable poor service.

NatWest's poor service added to what was already a distressing situation for Miss P. And whilst we can't consider stand-alone complaints about complaint-handling (as this isn't a regulated activity) I can, however, consider the customer service she received.

Taking everything into account, I consider £200 is fair and reasonable for the distress and inconvenience caused. This is consistent with awards made in similar circumstances and reflects that I cannot compensate Miss P for matters not caused by any shortcomings in NatWest's service .

I appreciate this isn't the outcome Miss P hoped for, but I hope my explanation helps her understand how I reached my decision.

Putting things right

NatWest should pay Miss P £200 compensation for the upset caused by its service failings.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold this complaint in part and NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK PUBLIC LIMITED COMPANY should take the steps set out above to put things right.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Miss P to accept or reject my decision before 15 April 2026.

Susan Webb
Ombudsman