

complaint

Ms C has complained that National Westminster Bank Plc (NatWest) mis-sold an Advantage Gold packaged bank account to her in 2002. She paid a monthly fee for the account which offered several benefits in return.

Ms C has used a claims management company (CMC) to bring her complaint to us.

background

One of our adjudicators looked into Ms C's complaint and didn't think that NatWest mis-sold the packaged account to her. The CMC didn't accept this and asked for an ombudsman to look at the complaint and make a final decision.

my findings

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. We have explained how we handle complaints about packaged bank accounts on our website. I have used this approach to decide what to do about Ms C's complaint.

Having thought about all the points that have been made, I don't think that NatWest mis-sold the packaged account to Ms C. And I'll explain why below:

- Ms C has said that she upgraded from a free account to a packaged account because she was told it would help her secure a mortgage with NatWest. But it seems that Ms C didn't apply for a mortgage with NatWest in the end. From what I've seen, I think it's more likely NatWest told Ms C about the preferential mortgage rate that was available with the Advantage Gold account. And as she was considering taking out a mortgage at the time, this was one of the benefits of the account that appealed to her. I think it's likely that when Ms C upgraded her account she was given a fair choice at the time. And she decided to upgrade to the Advantage Gold account because she was attracted to some or all of the benefits the new account provided.
- I don't think NatWest recommended the packaged account to Ms C so it didn't have to check if the account was suitable for her. It was up to Ms C to decide whether the account was right for her, taking into account what it came with and her circumstances and existing insurance at the time.
- When Ms C took out the account NatWest had to give her clear enough information so she was able to decide if she wanted it. NatWest has said it would have provided a welcome pack with information about the account features and benefits. But it seems likely this would have been sent to Ms C after she'd decided to upgrade her account. So I accept it's possible that NatWest might not have given her clear enough information when she made her decision about the account. However, I haven't seen anything to suggest that Ms C wouldn't have taken out the account if she had had clearer information at the time.
- The CMC has said that Ms C suffers from a medical condition and so may have needed to take out stand-alone travel insurance policies tailored to her condition, rather than use the insurance the packaged account provided. But the CMC has

confirmed that Ms C didn't suffer from her condition when she took the packaged account. So this wouldn't have been a consideration of hers at the time and wouldn't have affected her decision to upgrade her account.

- I think it's likely that Ms C upgraded to a packaged account because she thought that some of the benefits would be useful for her. The CMC has said that Ms C didn't need or use any of the benefits. I accept that she may not have needed to claim on any of the insurance policies attached to the account. But they covered Ms C against the *possibility* of something going wrong. I also accept that Ms C didn't register for any benefits. But not all of the benefits required registration and just because Ms C didn't need to make any claims on the insurances, or use all the benefits the account offered straight away, doesn't mean that it was mis-sold.
- I've also thought about what the CMC has said about the travel insurance not being value for money for Ms C as she only went on holiday once a year at most. But the account offered more than just the travel insurance and had several other benefits as well. So this doesn't make me think that Ms C would have done anything differently when taking the account.
- Ms C has said that she didn't need mobile phone insurance or car breakdown cover as she already had cover for this. But these weren't benefits of the account in 2002. And I think NatWest probably did inform Ms C when they were added because these benefits would have made the account more attractive. It was then for her to decide whether to cancel her existing arrangements or not.

my final decision

I want to reassure Ms C that I have looked at all the information I have about her complaint. But having done so I don't think NatWest mis-sold the packaged account to her and so I don't uphold the complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I am required to ask Ms C to accept or reject my decision before 22 June 2015.

Lauren Long
ombudsman