

complaint

Mr C complains that Vanquis Bank Limited didn't treat him fairly when it blocked his card.

background

When Vanquis blocked Mr C's credit card as part of a routine security check, he wasn't at home and didn't have access to the required proof. Mr C wanted Vanquis to remove the block but it said it wasn't able to do this.

Mr C had made a £500 payment instead of the minimum monthly payment in May 2015. This was in readiness for Mr C's visit to another country. Mr C asked Vanquis to return the £500 payment to his account so that he could use the money on holiday. Vanquis said it would take two to three working days. By this time, Mr C would've arrived back home.

When Mr C returned home, he sent the various proofs by email. But as he didn't send the full self-assessment document, Vanquis didn't lift the block. And when Mr C asked the bank to return the £500 payment, it told him that his account would then exceed the limit so it would charge him additional fees.

Vanquis credited Mr C's account with £20 and offered to reimburse his call costs on receipt a telephone bill. Mr C wasn't willing to accept this offer.

Our adjudicator considered that Mr C's complaint should be upheld. He said Vanquis was entitled to place the block on Mr C's account. But he didn't agree the bank's payment of £20 went far enough. Our adjudicator recommended that Vanquis pay a further £100.

Vanquis won't agree to increase the level of compensation. It says the block could've been lifted if Mr C had sent all of the required evidence. Vanquis says it's already refunded £48 of default charges and offered to reimburse call costs. Vanquis says it applied the block correctly. And that it could not return the payment to Mr C any more quickly than stated.

my findings

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 agree with our adjudicator's conclusions.

Our adjudicator has already explained to Mr C that he doesn't consider Vanquis made a mistake when it blocked his credit card. The bank is entitled to do this under the terms of Mr C's agreement. I don't intend adding anything further to this.

I've listened to the various calls that took place between Mr C and Vanquis. I'm persuaded that Vanquis could've been more helpful than it was. Understandably Mr C became frustrated at times and this came across to the various call handlers. But I can also hear that Vanquis ended the conversation early on more than one occasion.

Mr C was just trying to find out how he could unblock his account or get the overpayment back in to his account. Vanquis gave him conflicting information at times. I appreciate that Vanquis can't be expected to return calls within a very short timescale if the relevant person isn't available. But overall, I find Vanquis could've been more helpful to Mr C.

Vanquis has asked us to quantify the additional compensation recommended by the adjudicator. I find that Mr C was inconvenienced on holiday and back at home. He has spent a number of hours in calls to the bank. I'm persuaded that an award of compensation is justified and in Mr C's case, I agree £20 isn't enough. I find a further £100 is fair and reasonable. It falls very much at the lower end of our moderate band so is not excessive.

Vanquis has offered to reimburse Mr C's call costs subject to receiving copy statements. As Vanquis lifted the block on the account on 4 June 2015, I consider it reasonable to require the bank to refund call costs from 29 May 2015 when Mr C first called the bank up to and including 4 June 2015. I leave it with Mr C to give Vanquis evidence of the costs incurred.

my final decision

My decision is that I uphold Mr C's complaint and order Vanquis Bank Limited to do the following in full and final settlement:

1. Pay Mr C £100 compensation (in addition to £20 already paid)
2. Reimburse Mr C's call costs between 29 May and 4 June 2015 subject to Mr C giving it appropriate evidence

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr C to accept or reject my decision before 18 February 2016.

Gemma Bowen
ombudsman