

complaint

Ms F has complained that National Westminster Bank Plc (NatWest) mis-sold a packaged bank account to her in 2009. She paid a monthly fee for the account which offered several benefits in return.

background

One of our adjudicators has looked into Ms F's complaint already. The adjudicator didn't think that NatWest mis-sold the packaged account and didn't recommend it pay any compensation.

Ms F didn't accept this recommendation and asked for an ombudsman to look at the complaint and make a final decision so her complaint has been passed to me to review.

my findings

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

We've explained how we handle complaints about packaged bank accounts on our website. I've used this approach to decide what to do about Ms F's complaint. I agree with our adjudicator that NatWest didn't mis-sell the packaged account to Ms F and doesn't owe her any compensation. I say this because:

- Ms F has told us that she had held a fee free account with another bank prior to opening the packaged account and free bank accounts are widely available in the United Kingdom. So I'm satisfied that Ms F probably knew that she could have a fee free account if she wanted one. I've thought about what she has said about feeling pressured into taking the packaged account, but I don't think I have enough to say she couldn't have had a fee free account if she really wanted to. So considering everything, I think it's most likely that NatWest gave Ms F a fair choice to take the packaged account or a free one and she chose to take it.
- Ms F has said that she didn't know about the fees until they appeared on her statements. She says she queried them but didn't do anything about them. It's possible that NatWest didn't tell Ms F about the fees at the time of sale. But Ms F says she was aware of them shortly after taking the account and didn't cancel or downgrade the account. This suggests to me that she was happy with the account and willing to pay the monthly fee to keep it.
- I haven't seen enough to make me think that NatWest recommended the packaged account to Ms F. So it didn't have to check if the account was suitable for her. But it did have to give her enough information so she could decide if the account was right for her.
- The packaged accounts came with a number of benefits. Ms F has told us that the key benefits of the account were discussed but she felt they were rushed. But as she went on to agree to the account, I think there must have been some of the benefits that attracted her enough to agree to pay the monthly fee for them. She may not have used all the benefits but this doesn't mean NatWest mis-sold the account.

- I can see that Ms F has applied for some loans which she has then not proceeded with, one shortly after she opened the account. The packaged account offered discounted loan rates and I think this is possibly what was attractive about the account to Ms F. Sometimes people are attracted by benefits that they never end up using and I think that's likely what happened here.
- It's possible that NatWest didn't tell Ms F everything it should have about the packaged account. But I haven't seen anything to make me think that Ms F wouldn't still have taken the account even if NatWest had told her everything.

I want to reassure Ms F that I have looked at all the information I have about her complaint. Having done so I don't think NatWest mis-sold the account and I don't think it owes her any money.

my final decision

For the reasons I've explained, I don't uphold Ms F's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I am required to ask Ms F to accept or reject my decision before 2 November 2015.

Rob Deadman
ombudsman