

complaint

Mrs B complains that Tesco Personal Finance PLC ("Tesco") returned a cheque via her bank marked "no account found". This shouldn't have happened as Tesco has all of Mrs B's details.

background

Mrs B has a Tesco credit card. She agreed a repayment plan in 2015. Mrs B sent a cheque to Tesco in May 2015. Tesco couldn't locate her account details so it returned the cheque to the paying bank.

Mrs B was upset that staff she knows personally may have seen the cheque when it was returned. Our adjudicator explained that returned cheques are dealt with centrally so the branch won't have seen it.

Our adjudicator didn't consider that Mrs B's complaint should be upheld. He said that Tesco couldn't be expected to find a customer based solely on the name on a cheque. When Tesco couldn't locate Mrs B's account, it followed standard practice and returned the cheque to the paying bank.

Mrs B is unhappy with our adjudicator's conclusions. She says the paying bank returned the cheque to Tesco and then Tesco forwarded it to her. Mrs B says Tesco has been very unhelpful and has pestered her.

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 the conclusions of our adjudicator.

I would first like to say that I haven't considered Mrs B's comments about Tesco pestering her. This didn't form part of her original complaint to this service so the bank hasn't had the chance to investigate. If Mrs B wants to complain about Tesco's treatment of her, she should contact the bank first. If she remains unhappy with the outcome, Mrs B can of course come back to this service.

I appreciate that it may disappoint Mrs B but I don't find that Tesco made a mistake when it returned her cheque. When Tesco agreed the repayment plan, it wrote to Mrs B telling her to write her account number on the back of any cheques. It wouldn't be in Tesco's interest not to apply the payment if it could. So it seems likely that Mrs B either didn't include her account number on the reverse of the cheque or if she did, it was written incorrectly. And as Tesco didn't have an accompanying letter with Mrs B's details on it, the bank couldn't apply the money to the correct account.

The paying bank forwarded the cheque to Mrs B along with Tesco's letter. This might have made it appear to Mrs B that Tesco had her details all along. But I don't find this was the case. Instead, the central team at the paying bank would've located Mrs B's details from its system and forwarded the cheque and letter on to her.

I'm satisfied that members of staff at Mrs B's local paying bank branch wouldn't have seen the cheque. So I can't find that Tesco did anything to cause embarrassment to Mrs B.

my final decision

Given my findings, my decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs B to accept or reject my decision before 30 December 2015.

Gemma Bowen
ombudsman