

complaint

Mrs L complains that Nationwide Building Society merged her details about her personal account to a third party in error. The mistake made by Nationwide caused Mrs L upset as she no longer speaks with the third party

background

Mrs L held a joint bank account for a particular purpose with a third party. This account isn't the subject of this complaint but Mrs L and the third party weren't on speaking terms at the time of this dispute. After it was brought to Mrs L's attention that some details about her and her husband's mortgage was sent to the third party, she contacted Nationwide at the beginning of October 2018. Mrs L was told that in error her profile had been merged with that of the third party and that she had a credit card on the third party's account. Nationwide said it would investigate the matter and suggested that Mrs L visit a branch to have the address changed. Mrs L says she was unable to visit the branch as she worked but attempted to change the address details via online banking. In December Mrs L also attempted to close the joint account online. In order to check how these changes were progressing Mrs L phoned the bank and asked for a new PIN number for telephone banking as she had difficulties with her existing details. Mrs L waited for a call to update her on the investigation. On 21 December Mrs L was told that the address on her mortgage account was showing the correct address but her cashbuilder account and her daughter's child trust fund account still had the third party's address.

Mrs L later discovered after speaking to the third party that the telephone PIN number had been sent to the third party together with other correspondence that was returned to Nationwide. Mrs L complained and Nationwide offered compensation of £350, subsequently increased to £400 in respect of all issues caused by it recording an incorrect address. Mrs L felt that this was insufficient and brought the complaint to us. We separated the complaints into a mortgage related complaint and a banking related complaint. I investigated the mortgage complaint and awarded compensation of £400 to Mr and Mrs L. Our adjudicator investigated the banking complaint and recommended an award of £200 to Mrs L. Nationwide disagreed and asked for a review saying that an award of compensation of £600 in total was greater than our guidelines suggested.

my findings

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

I issued a decision in the mortgage complaint and I recall there were very specific issues connected to the information that Nationwide disclosed that led to an award of £400 in that case. Although the root cause of the complaint is the same, the failure to record Mrs L's address correctly, this complaint is different in time than the mortgage complaint as it happened in December rather than September and October, refers to a different account and in fact the complainant is different being Mrs L and not her and her husband. Also, the information that could have been potentially disclosed was different being personal banking details as opposed to the mortgage information I set out in the other decision I issued. So, I believe that I can treat these complaints separately and assess the awards as appropriate to these separate incidents.

It's unclear why the address on Mrs L's account hadn't changed after the initial issue with the mortgage product in September/ October. I presume the mortgage department must not have communicated that information to the banking function of Nationwide. It seems that some correspondence was sent to the third party and a PIN number. I recognise the distress this may have caused particularly the feeling of vulnerability of sending her telephone PIN number to a person who's already got access to some personal information about the bank accounts, knew Mrs L and wasn't on speaking terms with her. In my view the amount suggested by our adjudicator of £200 represents a fair award and on that basis I shall be upholding this complaint.

my final decision

My decision is that I uphold this complaint and require Nationwide Building Society to pay Mrs L £200.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs L to accept or reject my decision before 28 June 2021.

Gerard McManus
ombudsman