

complaint

Mr M complains that Vanquis Bank Limited sent him a replacement credit card without informing him beforehand. He's also unhappy it wouldn't send a further replacement to a different address.

background

Mr M's Vanquis credit card was due to expire on 31 October 2018. So, on 3 September 2018 Vanquis sent a replacement credit card to his home address. But Mr M said he didn't receive it and, when he asked Vanquis to send a new one to an alternative address, it refused. Mr M's also unhappy that he can't access his account online because he doesn't have a card.

So Mr M complained to Vanquis. He said it shouldn't have sent his replacement credit card without informing him beforehand and should've sent it to an address of his choice. He told Vanquis it should compensate him for the trouble and upset he was caused. But Vanquis didn't agree. It said it hadn't made an error and didn't offer him any compensation.

Mr M brought his complaint to us. While our investigator empathised with Mr M, they didn't think that Vanquis had done anything wrong or needed to do anything more here. But Mr M disagreed and asked for his complaint to be referred to an ombudsman.

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've reached the same overall conclusion as the investigator for broadly the same reasons. I appreciate this will come as a disappointment to Mr M so I'll explain why.

The first part of Mr M's complaint is about Vanquis sending him a replacement card without notifying him beforehand. So, I'll focus on that issue first.

Mr M had the original card. So, I think it likely he'd have known the card was due to expire and to expect a replacement card. Vanquis says it's standard banking practice to send replacement cards without notifying a customer first. It says cards are generated automatically based on the expiry date of the existing card.

Like our investigator, I'm also persuaded by this explanation because the general practice within the banking industry is that a few weeks before an existing card expires a new one is sent to the registered address for the account. This would usually be accompanied by a letter advising that the existing card should be securely destroyed as soon as the new one is activated. While Mr M didn't receive the card that was posted in September, fortunately, there's no evidence that it's been fraudulently or dishonestly used by anyone.

I've seen the terms and conditions of Mr M's credit card account, which clearly explain that notice will only be given before a card is replaced if the new card has different features or where it's for a different product. There's no evidence that either of those circumstances applied here.

So, I'm satisfied Vanquis followed typical banking industry practice here and that it hasn't done anything wrong in sending a replacement card to Mr M without informing him first.

The second part of Mr M's complaint is about Vanquis refusing to send a replacement card to an address of his choice. Mr M says he didn't want his replacement card sent to his registered address because he lives in shared accommodation. He also said he changes location frequently and asked Vanquis to send his replacement card to his work address. But for security reasons Vanquis said it could only send a replacement card to the address registered on his account, which had been verified as a genuine and valid customer address.

Having seen notes from Mr M's account I can see he'd had various discussions with Vanquis during 2018 regarding the concerns he had with it corresponding with him at his home address. In May, he had raised a complaint with Vanquis after it sent a card to his work address without proof of this address being provided by him first. So, with this in mind, I think Mr M knew Vanquis' procedures for changing correspondence addresses.

I also think it was reasonable for Vanquis to want to verify an address they'd been asked to send correspondence to. That's especially the case here, where Mr M had already raised the concerns I've mentioned above. So Vanquis followed its security procedure and used only the address registered on Mr M's account for security reasons. This is Vanquis' procedure, which it's entitled to set. As we're not the regulator of banks and building societies, I can't ask it to change its policy or to adopt the changes that Mr M would like.

I've thought carefully about everything that Mr M and Vanquis have said here. But I'm satisfied that Vanquis followed its own policy properly and explained why it couldn't issue a replacement card to a different address. I can see it advised Mr M of alternative ways of receiving a replacement card at his home address. It offered to send him a card by recorded delivery and invited him to contact customer services to arrange this. I think this recognised Mr M's concerns and was helpful advice in the circumstances.

The final part of Mr M's complaint is about his inability to access his online account. This can only be resolved once he receives his new card because not having the card is what's preventing him from accessing his online account. So once he receives his new card he'll be able to use it to reset his details and access his online account. I can see Vanquis gave him helpful advice on how to access account information via customer services and the Vanquis App until that point.

I appreciate that Mr M feels very strongly about the issues raised in this complaint and I realise that it must have been inconvenient and frustrating for these problems not to have been resolved as he'd have liked. But I'm satisfied Vanquis has dealt with this complaint fairly. It hasn't done anything wrong. So I don't think it would be fair to ask it to do anymore or to offer compensation to Mr M.

my final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 24 February 2019.

Julie Robertson
ombudsman