

complaint

Mr I complains that Vanquis Bank Limited suspended and then closed his account.

background

Vanquis wrote to Mr I, explaining that during a routine review of his account, it had been unable to verify all or some of the information he'd provided when he applied. It explained that it had temporarily suspended the account. It asked him to send various documents to prove his identity, address and employment. And it warned him that the account would be closed if he didn't provide these within 14 days. After 14 days had passed, Vanquis wrote to Mr I again, in similar terms.

Mr I provided documents to Vanquis more than five weeks after it had asked for them. But Vanquis says the documents were copies, not originals as it required. Mr I spoke to Vanquis a week later and it told him that it required original documents. When Vanquis had heard nothing further a week later, it closed the account.

Mr I is unhappy that Vanquis suspended his account then closed it. He says he provided the documentation Vanquis asked for.

Our adjudicator didn't recommend that the complaint should be upheld. She said, in summary, that Vanquis had given Mr I the required notice that it would close the account. And it was entitled to take a commercial decision to close it.

Mr I isn't happy with the adjudicator's view. He says he kept in touch with Vanquis about the issue throughout. It was only after he sent his documents that Vanquis told him that the letter from his employer needed to include details of his income and hours. He sent it straight away, by first class post, and he believes that Vanquis received it the next day, before it closed the account.

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 conclusion as the adjudicator.

I'm satisfied that under the terms and conditions, Vanquis was entitled to suspend the account. When Vanquis wrote to Mr I with details of the documents it required him to provide for the second time, it again gave him 14 days to provide the documents. But Vanquis didn't receive any documents from Mr I in response to its request until more than three weeks after it sent the second letter – that was eleven days after the second 14-day deadline expired. In the circumstances, I'm satisfied that Vanquis was entitled to close the account.

I acknowledge that Mr I says he sent all the documents Vanquis had asked for. And I accept that its letter didn't make clear that if he provided a letter from his employer, it would need to show details of his hours and income. But Vanquis's records say that the letter Mr I provided from his employer was a copy, rather than an original. The letter had clearly stated that if such a letter was provided, it needed to be an original. So the letter Mr I provided didn't satisfy Vanquis's requirements in any event.

Vanquis spoke to Mr I a week after it received his documents. It told him that it needed the documents to be originals. I can understand Mr I's frustration that Vanquis closed the account even though he'd kept in touch with it about what it needed. But Vanquis waited a further week after speaking to Mr I before it closed the account. I acknowledge that Mr I says he'd sent the documents by first class post. But Vanquis can't reasonably be held responsible for any delays in the postal system. And I'm satisfied that it hadn't received any further documents from Mr I. And by then it was more than seven weeks after it had first written to him asking for the information.

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr I. I understand that he feels that he's been unfairly treated. But I don't find that Vanquis did anything wrong in closing the account when it did. So I can't require it to re-open the account or to take any other action.

my final decision

My decision is that I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr I to accept or reject my decision before 4 April 2016.

Juliet Collins
ombudsman