

The complaint

Ms A complains that Nationwide Building Society blocked her account card whilst abroad.

What happened

Ms A was abroad in March 2022 and says she tried to use her Nationwide account card to make purchases. She says the card was blocked and spoke to Nationwide. Ms A says the block was removed but then reappplied on a number of occasions causing her to make further calls to Nationwide before using an alternative credit card which incurred a foreign transaction fee of just over £40. She would like compensation for that fee and says she spent some time on calls to Nationwide whilst on holiday.

Nationwide says it acted in line with account terms and conditions when it had security concerns. It says the type of concerns it had meant it could not call Ms A but required her to make contact with it.

Ms A brought her complaint to us, and our investigator didn't uphold it. The investigator thought Nationwide had security concerns and was entitled to block the account.

Ms A doesn't accept that view and questions why the block kept being applied.

What I've decided – and why

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 have come to the overall view that I don't uphold this complaint. I appreciate Ms A will be disappointed by my decision.

I am sure Ms A appreciates that fraud is a major problem for banks and building societies and they must have measures in place to protect its money and its customers money. I accept that on occasions that legitimate customers and transactions can be affected by anti-fraud measures such as here. And that such measures inevitably cause legitimate customers inconvenience but that doesn't mean a mistake has been made.

I have looked carefully at Ms A's account terms and conditions which I think she would have agreed to when the account was first opened. Those terms and conditions make clear that Nationwide may refuse a transaction if it has security concerns. Having looked at Nationwide's records from March 2022, I'm satisfied that it had security and fraud concerns about Ms A's attempted card use and that the type of concerns meant it couldn't contact her directly. So, I don't think Nationwide made a mistake or acted unfairly by blocking the transactions and don't think it matters that the problem continued for more than one attempted purchase as each attempted purchase is considered individually. I'm also satisfied that Nationwide has acted in line with agreed account terms and conditions.

I appreciate Ms A was caused inconvenience in making the calls to Nationwide and used an alternative credit card. But that doesn't mean Nationwide has made a mistake or that I can

fairly order it to pay compensation for the foreign transaction fee, as it's clear from the terms and conditions that a transaction use is not guaranteed.

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 Ms A to accept or reject my decision before 31 August 2023.

David Singh
Ombudsman